

A Trip to the Islands Near the River Murray Mouth.

By J. Sutton.

Dr. A. M. Morgan and I were the guests of Dr. A. S. Randell and Mr. Fred T. Bruce on a trip to some of the islands near the mouth of the River Murray from 22nd to 24th March, 1929. Leaving Mitcham at 2.30 p.m., we motored through Glen Osmond, Crafers, Stirling West, Aldgate, Mylor, Bigg's Flat, Echunga, Meadows, Bull's Creek, Ashbourne, Currency Creek, and reached Goolwa, 58 miles, at 4.40 p.m. The weather was warm and sultry when we left Adelaide, but it had changed to a cool south-west breeze when we reached Ashbourne, and the breeze continued from that quarter for the remainder of the trip. We got away from Goolwa in a launch (petrol-driven) at 6.15 p.m., proceeding up the Goolwa Channel for four miles, and anchored for the night near one of the beacons

marking the channel. At 6.22 a.m. on the following morning we went further up stream, passed the eastern end of Hindmarsh Island, then Ram Island, Long Island, Shallow Creek, and anchored off Deep Creek, Reedy Island No. 2, at 8.38 a.m. After breakfast we rowed up Deep Creek and landed on the northern shore. This part of the island, as well as the other portion, is low-lying, being about three to four feet above the level of the Lake. It is covered with samphire, much lignum, and some nitre bushes, with reeds along the shores in many places. Off the southern end there was a very large sandy plain, which was dry at the time of our visit, but at high tide or a flooded river is probably covered with water. We walked about there until noon, went back to the launch for lunch, and then rowed to the other and larger part of Reedy Island No. 2, but after pulling for 70 yards the water became so shallow that we had to walk some 80 yards in the water to reach the shore. We landed near a fisherman's hut, and walked about a mile across the island to another fisherman's hut on Shooting Creek. The vegetation on this part was similar to the other, but the land was more open, and on walking along a slight ridge covered in long dry grass and samphire we came on one fox earth, which was in occupation, judging by the smell, and in a distance of 150 yards found ten sloughed skins of snakes, one of which, unbroken, though stretched a little, was identified by Mr. H. M. Hale, of the S.A. Museum, as that of a black snake. We walked along the Lake shore to the landing-place, got on board the launch, and left at 4 p.m., going back on our course as far as Mundoo Island. We went down Mundoo Channel to Lucerne Island, where we anchored for the night. The channel here was about 300 yards wide. On the morning of the 24th we left at 7.48 a.m., went as far as the inlet in which Goose Island is situated, landed on the mainland, and worked it until 12.27 p.m., and left for Goolwa, which we reached at 3.35 p.m., then by motor-car homewards, encountering some rain by the way, and arrived at Mitcham at 6.40 p.m.

With the exception of Hindmarsh Island, which seems to be of the same geological formation as the mainland, the other islands we saw have evidently been formed by the deposition of the silt carried down by the waters of the River Murray. On Mundoo and Lucerne Islands, besides the usual undergrowth, there were belts of beatarees (*Melaleuca*) about 30 feet high. Outside the beacons of the channel the water is very shallow near all the islands.

It was interesting to find that the migratory wading birds—Eastern Curlew, Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked

(Little) Stint, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper—were still at their "winter" residence (the two last named in great numbers), and exhibited no signs of the "jumps," which are sure indications to my mind of the near approach of their departure for their breeding-places in Siberia. (On a trip to the Coorong on 5th-8th March, 1925, the waders were numerous and very "jumpy.") Probably the delay in their departure was caused by the unseasonable continuation of warm weather, in which there was no break until near the end of April.

On the islands, the River, Lake Alexandrina, and the mainland near Goose Island we noted, in all, 51 species with 10,066 individuals, and, including those seen between Adelaide and Goolwa, the species total 73 and the individuals 10,630. In every case the numbers in parentheses after the names represent the individuals noted.

I have to thank Professor Cleland for determining the contents of the crop of the Stubble-Quail, and Mr. A. M. Lea, F.E.S., Entomologist of the S.A. Museum, for the stomach contents of the Spotted Crake and the Black-shouldered Kite. *Coturnix pectoralis*, Stubble-Quail (3).

These were seen on Reedy Island No. 2. One, ♀, was picked up dead. It had been shot most probably the day before. Its crop was full of the fruits of the ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*).

Porzana fluminea, Spotted Crake (1).

This bird was seen on Reedy Island No. 2, feeding at the water's edge under lignum bushes. It was secured for the S.A. Museum. ♀—Iris, red; bill, culmen dull green, lower mandible bright green, tomia of upper mandible bright green; legs and feet dull green, soles grey; inside mouth, bluish grey; total length, 19.5 cm.; spread of wings 31.5 cm. Stomach contents: numerous seeds of saltbush, and 16 small shells identified by Mr. R. Cotton as a fluviatile mollusc (*Potamopyrgus* sp., probably new).

Podiceps cristatus, Great Crested Grebe (7).

These were seen in Lake Alexandrina between Ram Island and Ewe Island Creek. They left the water in each instance when the launch was 100 yards off, flew low, and the frill on the neck showed out clearly.

Podiceps poliocephalus, Hoary-headed Grebe (9).

Six were seen in Lake Alexandrina near Ram Island, and three in the bay near Goose Island.

Phalacrocorax carbo, Black Cormorant (2).

These were seen in Lake Alexandrina between Ram Island and Ewe Island Creek.

Phalacrocorax ater, Little Black Cormorant (2).

One was seen in the Goolwa Channel and one in the Lake near Ram Island.

Phalacrocorax varius, Pied Cormorant (50).

Three were seen in the Goolwa Channel and 47 in Lake Alexandrina.

Microcarbo melanoleucus, Little Pied Cormorant (223).

These were the commonest Cormorants, and were seen everywhere we went. Eighty-seven were noted in the Goolwa Channel, mostly sitting on rocks or posts in the water near the shores.

Pelecanus conspicillatus, Pelican (715).

Forty-six were seen in the Goolwa Channel, 15 in the Mundoo Channel, seven near Goose Island, and 647 in Lake Alexandrina. One flock, estimated at 500, were standing on a spit about a mile off the entrance to Shallow Creek.

Hydroprogne caspia, Caspian Tern (101).

Sixteen were seen in the Goolwa Channel, 13 near Ram Island, 63 near Reedy Island No. 2 (50 of these were standing on a sandspit in the company of about the same number of Silver Gulls. I walked towards them to get them to rise, but they merely flew over the Gulls and landed on the spit further out in the Lake), four were seen in the Mundoo Channel, and five near Goose Island. Three of these were quartering the little bay, and one uttered a light whistling, almost whining, call, whilst another gave a harsh scream not unlike that of a White Cockatoo.

Sterna bergii, Crested Tern (4).

Two were seen near Reedy Island No. 2, one in the Mundoo Channel, and one in the Goolwa Channel.

Sterna nereis, Fairy Tern (4).

These were seen at our anchorage off Deep Creek, Reedy Island No. 2.

Larus novae-hollandiae, Silver Gull (376).

They were met with everywhere. As soon as we anchored off Reedy Island No. 2 41 Silver Gulls flew about near the stern of the launch. One of these birds had lost its right leg from just above the tibio-tarsal joint.

Lobibyx novae-hollandiae, Spur-winged Plover (102).

Twelve were noted on Hindmarsh Island (one of these called at 5.40 a.m. and again at 6 a.m.), 56 at Reedy Island No. 2, 25 on Mundoo and Lucerne Islands (one of these called about 9 p.m.), and nine on the mainland near Goose Island.

Charadrius ruficapillus, Red-capped Dotterel (60).

These were seen on the shore of Mundoo Island from our anchorage there. They arrived about 6 p.m. in one flock, and alighted near the Red-necked (Little) Stints. We were not sure of their identity, so Dr. Morgan rowed me over near to the shore, and we were able to pick out these Dotterels.

Recurvirostra novae-hollandiae, Red-necked Avocet (9).

These were seen in the early morning at our anchorage in Mundoo Channel standing on a sandspit at the mouth of an inlet in Lucerne Island.

Numenius cyanopus, Eastern Curlew (7).

Four were seen on Hindmarsh Island in the Goolwa Channel, two near Shallow Creek, and one flew past us at close quarters on the shore of Reedy Island No. 2.

Tringa nebularia, Greenshank (8).

One was seen close to the jetty on Hindmarsh Island, one was heard at 10.44 p.m. at our anchorage in the Goolwa Channel, two on Reedy Island No. 2, two at our anchorage in the Goolwa Channel, and two near Goose Island. The Greenshanks at Reedy Island No. 2 called many times, as did one at Goose Island. The ordinary call of the Greenshank on our shores is "Tewey-tewey," or "Tew-hoo." In the Mundoo Channel at 8 and 8.45 p.m. we heard this call, but at 7.55 and 8.50 p.m. we heard very loud and varied calls, which none of us had heard before. The only parts I can remember were like "sip-sip-sip," or "jick-jick-jick," and "tew" brought in twice in the song. I have since found that Bent, in the U.S. National Museum Bulletin, No. 142, 1927, mentions that "Ip, chip, chip, ip, chip, chip," etc., was a call of one of a pair of Greenshanks during the incubation period. One wonders whether the bird was intimating to its mate that it was time they had gone north to the nesting-grounds! One of the birds near Goose Island was standing silently in shallow water, and, thus shortened, looked like the woodcut of a Knot, but as soon as it flushed it gave the Greenshank's usual call.

Erolia testacea, Curlew Sandpiper (10).

One was seen at Reedy Island No. 2, and a flock of nine flew past us when we were in Lake Alexandrina near Hindmarsh Island.

Erolia ruficollis, Red-necked (Little) Stint (313).

One hundred and fifteen were seen at Reedy Island No. 2, and 198 on the shore of Mundoo Island near our anchorage in the Mundoo Channel.

Erolia acuminata, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (414).

Sixty-one were seen near the jetty on Hindmarsh Island, 50 on Hindmarsh Island in the Goolwa Channel, 200 on Reedy Island No. 2, 60 on Mundoo Island, 15 on Lucerne Island, and 28 on Goose Island.

Stints and Sandpipers (949).

The species could not be identified of the following flocks of Stints and Sandpipers:—150 near Shallow Creek, 103 near Reedy Island, six near Ram Island, 500, 150, and 40 in the Mundoo Channel.

Threskiornis molucca, White Ibis (7).

These were seen in the inlet near Goose Island.

Notophoya novaehollandiae, White-faced Heron (14).

Two were seen in the Goolwa Channel, five on Reedy Island No. 2, four in the Mundoo Channel, and three near Goose Island.

Cereopsis novaehollandiae, Cape Barren Goose (2).

These birds were flushed by Dr. Randell and Mr. Bruce from the shore of the bay in the Goolwa Channel at Clayton.

Chenopsis atrata, Black Swan (94).

Two were seen in the Goolwa Channel, 11 on Lake Alexandrina, 70 at Reedy Island No. 2 (one flock of 50), and 11 in Mundoo Channel. A number of bones of this species were found in a sandbank on Reedy Island No. 2.

Casarca tadornoides, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck (Mountain Duck) (624).

Two were seen in the Goolwa Channel, 47 in Lake Alexandrina, 275 near Shallow Creek (three flocks were 100, 60, and 50 each), 187 at Reedy Island No. 2, and 113 in the Mundoo Channel.

Anas superciliosa, Black Duck (172).

Two were seen in the Goolwa Channel, 17 near Ram Island, four near Long Island, 20 near Shallow Creek, 111 at Reedy Island No. 2 (one flock of 50), and 18 in the Mundoo Channel.

Querquedula gibberifrons, Grey Teal (1,963).

Six were seen in the Goolwa Channel, two near Ram Island, four near Long Island, 153 near Shallow Creek (two flocks were 100 and 41 each), 1,052 near Shooting Creek (four flocks were 400, 350, 150, and 100 each), 130 at Reedy Island No. 2 (two flocks of 100 and 30 each), and 616 in the Mundoo Channel. Ducks and Teal (3,505).

These could not be identified. Thirty, one flock at the mouth of the River Finnis, in the Goolwa Channel, 1,400 near Long Island (two flocks of 1,000 and 400 each), 475 near Shallow Creek (three flocks were 240, 160, and 40 each), 1,450 at Reedy Island No. 2 (three flocks of 1,000, 300, and 150 each—very few Mountain Duck were in them), and 150 in the Mundoo Channel. Teal comprised the bulk of all these birds.

We saw no *Nyroca australis*, Hardheads, nor *Spatula rhynchotis*, Blue-winged Shovelers. The ferryman, who had taken a party down the Coorong, told us that these two species were fairly numerous there.

Haliastur sphenurus, Whistling Eagle (6).

One was seen near Ram Island, four at Reedy Island No. 2, and one near the inlet at Goose Island

Elanus axillaris, Black-shouldered Kite (1).

This bird was seen on Reedy Island No. 2, and was secured for the S.A. Museum. ♀, immature—iris, light brown; bill, black, cere yellow; legs and feet, bright yellow; inside mouth, horn colour; total length, 35.5 cm.; spread of wings, 89 cm. Stomach contents: bones and fur of two mice, bones and fur of a young rat, identified by Mr. H. H. Finlayson as probably *Rattus lutreola*, dusky-footed rat (water rat).

Falco cenchroides, Nankeen Kestrel (1).

This bird was seen on the mainland near Goose Island.

Glossopsitta porphyrocephala, Purple-crowned Lorikeet (2).

These flew overhead when we were on the mainland near Goose Island.

Neophema elegans, Elegant Parrot (14).

These were seen in the wild tobacco-bushes on the mainland near Goose Island.

Chalcites basalis, Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo (1).

This bird was seen and heard on Reedy Island No. 2 in the forenoon.

Hirundo neoxena, Welcome Swallow (12).

Eleven were flying about the River at Goolwa, and one was seen on Reedy Island No. 2.

Rhipidura leucophrys, Willie Wagtail (3).

Two were seen on Goose Island, and one on the mainland near there.

Grallina cyanoleuca, Magpie-Lark (5).

One was noted on Lucerne Island, one at the north side of Hindmarsh Island, and three on the mainland near Goose Island.

Epthianura albifrons, White-fronted Chat (44).

Six were seen flying over the River from the mainland to Hindmarsh Island (four of them at 6.30 a.m.), 26 on Reedy Island No. 2, one on Lucerne Island, and 11 on the mainland near Goose Island.

Acanthiza pusilla, Brown Thornbill (1).

This bird was seen in some teatrees growing on the shore of the inlet near Goose Island.

Acanthiza chrysorrhoa, Yellow-tailed Thornbill (13).

Four were seen on Hindmarsh Island near the jetty, and nine on the mainland near Goose Island.

Sericornis sp., Scrub-Wren (4).

These were seen among the teatrees growing on the shore of the inlet near Goose Island. The species was not identified.

Megalurus gramineus, Little Grassbird (14).

They were noted on Reedy Island No. 2, in the lignum and nitre bushes. They responded to the three-note call of "Pee-pee-pee" when whistled.

Malurus cyaneus, Superb Blue Wren (5).

Four were heard in the bushes on Reedy Island No. 2, and one was seen on the mainland near Goose Island.

Zosterops halmaturina, Grey-backed Silvereye (12).

Eleven were noted on Reedy Island No. 2, and one on the mainland near Goose Island.

Plectorhyncha lanceolata, Striped Honeyeater (1).

This bird was seen on Reedy Island No. 2.

Meliphaga virescens, Singing Honeyeater (14).

Two were seen on Reedy Island No. 2, and 12 on the mainland near Goose Island.

Anthus australis, Pipit (Groundlark) (7).

Five were noted on Reedy Island, and two on the mainland near Goose Island.

Mirafra javanica, Horsfield Bushlark (2).

These were flushed from some grass and tussocks on the mainland near Goose Island. Our attention was drawn to them as they hovered for a second or so before dropping into the cover.

Corvus ceciliae, Crow (138).

Forty-six were seen on Hindmarsh Island, 65 near our anchorage in the Mundoo Channel (35 of these flew over to some teatrees on Mundoo Island, whilst 30 remained on Lucerne Island), 11 were seen near Goose Island, and 16 were flying along the mainland shore in the Goolwa Channel.

Cracticus torquatus, Grey Butcher-Bird (1).

A call was heard from Lucerne Island as we were anchored in the Mundoo Channel.

Gymnorhina hypoleuca, White-backed Magpie (15).

Six were noted on Hindmarsh Island, two on Mundoo Island, and seven near Goose Island.

On Reedy Island No. 2, in a sandbank at the water's edge, was saw a few burrows which had been used recently by White-backed Swallows (*Cheramoeca leucosterna*). In a small opening in the limestone cliff at the landing-place on the mainland near Goose Island we saw seven nests intact and two broken of the Fairy Martin (*Hylöchelidon ariel*). The nests had been used in the past season

During our journeys between Adelaide and Goolwa the following species were seen:—White-faced Heron (1); *Falco berigora*, Brown Hawk (1); Hawk sp. (1); *Glossopsitta concinna*, Musk Lorikeet (4); Purple-crowned Lorikeet (16); *Platycercus adelaidae*, Adelaide Rosella (70); *Psephotus haematonotus*, Red-backed Parrot (12); *Dacelo gigas*, Laughing Kookaburra (13); Welcome Swallow (11); Willie Wagtail (9); *Seisura inquieta*, Restless Flycatcher (3); *Microeca fascians*, Jacky Winter (2); *Petroica multicolor*, Scarlet Robin (1); *Pachycephala pectoralis*, Golden Whistler (1); *Colluricincla harmonica*, Grey Shrike-Thrush (1); Magpie-Lark (6); *Cinclosoma punctatum*, Spotted Quail-Thrush (1), flew across the road in front of the car near Meadows; *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-browed Babbler (1); White-fronted Chat (19); *Acanthiza lineata*, Striated Thornbill (1); Yellow-tailed Thornbill (11); Superb Blue Wren (22); *Climacteris picumnus*, Brown Tree-creeper (3); *C. leucophaea*, White-throated Tree-creeper (1); *Melithreptus lunatus*, White-naped Honeyeater (3); *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*, Eastern Spinebill (1); Singing Honeyeater (1); *Meliphaga penicillata*, White-plumed Honeyeater (3); *Meliornis novae-hollandiae*, Yellow-winged Honeyeater (82); *Myzantha melanocephala*, Noisy Miner (9); *Anthochaera carunculata*, Red Wattle-Bird (14); Pipit (2); *Aegintha temporalis*, Red-browed Finch (8); Crow (1); and White-backed Magpie (229).