

An Outing to Sugarloaf Park.

By J. Sutton.

This outing from 30th September to 4th October, 1929, was made by Dr. A. M. Morgan, Messrs. F. E. Parsons, Edwin and Keith Ashby, and J. Sutton. This property belongs to Mr. L. Parsons, and is situated in a direct line 14 miles south-east of Meningie, 16 miles west-south-west of Coonalpyn, and 12

miles north-east of McGrath's Flat. Mr. Edwin Ashby advises me thus:—"It forms a portion of a flat sandy plain, small sand rises being scattered a few miles apart. Except on a few of these sand rises there are no trees, but on most of them there are mallees of several species from four to six feet in height. On the level portion of these plains eucalypts in the form of mallee are almost entirely absent. The vegetation is generally composed of dwarf, extremely dwarf, shrubs, which thickly cover the ground surface. For the most part these shrubs are dwarf examples of shrubs and bushes found in the Mount Lofly Ranges, and many are common bushes in the Mount Compass country. . . . The Mallee Emu-Wren seems here misnamed, for it evidently lives and nests in the 'heath-like' country where mallee, when represented at all, is only in isolated dwarf clumps. The Dark Thornbill also seems to be confined to the same peculiar ecological conditions, and the Field-Wren of this region is able to do the 'disappearing trick' in this mat of dwarf shrubs, often not more than 12 inches in height. It does suggest that the peculiar conditions of this country have exercised a distinct influence on the avifauna, producing, certainly, in one case, a distinct geographical race."

At Sugarloaf Park the most noticeable feature was the great number of Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters in the district. They must total thousands, and in the parts we visited 687 individuals were noted. In the early morning, beginning about 4.50 a.m., there were at least 50 of them soon calling in the low scrub round our camp.

The Mallee Emu-Wren, Dark Thornbill, Shy Ground-Wren, and Field-Wren were first met with at a spot five miles east of Meningie in the scrub beside the track.

During the whole of the trip 99 species, with 3,612 individuals, were noted (the figures within parentheses after the names indicate the number of individuals). The species (48) marked with an asterisk were met with at Sugarloaf Park. Forty-seven nests, referable to 17 species, were found.

Coturnix pectoralis, Stubble-Quail (2); *Geopelia placida*; Peaceful Dove (1); *Phaps chalcoptera*, Common Bronzewing (5); **P. elegans*, Brush Bronzewing (2); *Ocyphaps lophotes*, Crested Pigeon (8); *Fulica atra*, Coot (50); *Podiceps cristatus*, Great Crested Grebe (2); *P. ruficollis*, Little Grebe (7); *Microcarbo melanoleucus*, Little Pied Cormorant (4); *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Pelican (76); *Chlidonias leucopareia*, Marsh Tern (333); *Sterna caspia*, Caspian Tern (1); *Larus novae-hollandiae*, Silver Gull (52); *Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*, Spur-

winged Plover (28); *Zonifer tricolor*, Banded Plover (119); *Charadrius ruficapillus*, Red-capped Dotterel (13); *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*, Banded Stilt (4); *Recurvirostra novae-hollandiae*, Red-necked Avocet (98); *Tringa nebularia*, Greenshank (2); *Erolia testacea*, Curlew-Sandpiper (15); *E. ruficollis*, Red-necked Stint (4); *E. acuminata*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (173); **Eupodotis australis*, Plain-Turkey (4); *Threskiornis spinicollis*, Straw-necked Ibis (8); *Notophoxya novae-hollandiae*, White-faced Heron (1); *Chenopsis atrata*, Black Swan (63); *Anas superciliosa*, Black Duck (4); *Querquedula gibberifrons*, Grey Teal (162); *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*, Pink-eared Duck (1); *Nyroca australis*, Hard-head (62); *Biziura lobata*, Musk Duck (10); *Circus approximans*, Swamp-Harrier (1); **Uroaetus audax*, Wedge-tailed Eagle (2); *Haliastur sphenurus*, Whistling Eagle (1); **Falco berigora*, Brown Hawk (1); **Falco cenchroides*, Nankeen Kestrel (16); **Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*, Purple-crowned Lorikeet (11); **Calyptorhynchus funereus*, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (10); *Platyercus adelaidae*, Adelaide Rosella (1); *Psephotus haematonotus*, Red-backed Parrot (3); *Dacelo gigas*, Laughing Kookaburra (2); **Cuculus pallidus*, Pallid Cuckoo (3); *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, Fan-tailed Cuckoo (1); **Chalcites basalis*, Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo (9); **Hirundo neoxena*, Welcome Swallow (23); *Hylochelidon nigricans*, Tree-Martin (3); **Rhipidura leucophrys*, Willie Wagtail (19); *Microeca fascians*, Jacky Winter (1); **Melanodryas cucullata*, Hooded Robin (4); *Pachycephala pectoralis*, Golden Whistler (1); *P. rufiventris*, Rufous Whistler (2); **Colluricincla harmonica*, Grey Shrike-Thrush (4); *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Magpie-Lark (10); **Oreoica gutturalis*, Crested Bellbird (8); **Coracina novae-hollandiae* (3); **Lalage tricolor*, White-winged Triller (5); **Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-browed Babbler (27); **Epthianura albifrons*, White-fronted Chat (137); *E. aurifrons*, Orange Chat (4); **Smicrornis brevirostris*, Brown Weebill (13); **Aphelocephala leucopsis*, Eastern Whiteface (5); *Acanthiza nana*, Little Thornbill (4); **A. hedleyi*, Dark Thornbill (17); **A. chrysorrhoa*, Yellow-tailed Thornbill (30); **Hylacola cauta*, Shy Ground-Wren (13); **Calamanthus campestris*, Rufous Field-Wren (129); **Cinclorhynchus cruralis*, Brown Songlark (22); *Acrocephalus australis*, Reed-Warbler (10); **Stipiturus mallee*, Mallee Emu-Wren (17); **Malurus cyaneus*, Superb Blue Wren (36); **M. assimilis*, Purple-backed Wren (45); **Artamus personatus*, Masked Wood-Swallow (7); **A. superciliosus*, White-browed Wood-Swallow (8); *A. cyanopterus*, Dusky Wood-Swallow (6);

Climacteris picumnus, Brown Tree-creeper (1); *C. leucophaea*, White-throated Tree-creeper (1); **Pardalotus xanthopygus*, Yellow-tailed Pardalote (23); **P. ornatus*, Red-tipped Pardalote (3); **Zosterops halmaturina*, Grey-backed Silvereye (4); **Melithreptus brevirostris*, Brown-headed Honeyeater (15); *Plectorhyncha lanceolata*, Striped Honeyeater (4); *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*, Eastern Spinebill (1); **Gliciphila melanops*, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (687); **G. albifrons*, White-fronted Honeyeater (36); **Meliphaga virescens*, Singing Honeyeater (6); **M. cratitia*, Purple-gaped Honeyeater (11); *M. penicillata*, White-plumed Honeyeater (7); **Meliornis novae-hollandiae*, Yellow-winged Honeyeater (114); *Myzantha melanocephala*, Noisy Miner (6); **Anthochaera chrysoptera*, Little Wattle-Bird (8); **A. carunculata*, Red Wattle-Bird (75); **Acanthagenys rufogularis*, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (14); **Anthus australis*, Pipit (66); **Mirafra javanica*, Bushlark (4); *Zonaeqinthus guttatus*, Diamond Firetail (2); **Corvus coronoides*, Raven (86); **Strepera melanoptera*, Black-winged Currawong (1); **Cracticus torquatus*, Grey Butcher-Bird (5); **Gymnorhina hypoleuca*, White-backed Magpie (240). Birds seen, but species not identified:—Cormorants, 2; Waders, 4; Ducks, 178; Hawk, 1; Wood-Swallows, 19.

Some Nests and Other Details.

Bustard, or Plain-Turkey.—One was seen about 6 p.m. on 1st October, three out on the plain on 2nd October, and another on 5th October. Their flight is slow and heavy, and at a height of 60 to 70 feet above the ground. From beneath, when the bird is flying, the primary feathers appear black (actually brown), and are separated from one another at the tips, giving a notched appearance to the end of the extended wings.

Wedge-tailed Eagle.—A nest was built in a big gumtree, and was situated in a three-pronged fork 21 feet from the ground. It was 135 cm. wide and 45 cm. deep. The lining of green leaves was 67 cm. in width. The dead sticks on the ground beneath the nest formed a heap larger than the nest itself. There were two young birds in the nest. They were covered with white down; iris sooty colour; bill bases bluish, tips black; cere, legs and feet light buffy white. Their whistling calls were like "Pseet-you" or "Sweet-you." There were no bones or remnants of food on the ground beneath, but in the nest were part of a young rabbit freshly killed and the remains of three or four other rabbits. This food was alive with blow-flies. There were no bones or portions of lambs or sheep about,

but a piece of sheep's-wool was clinging to a limb of the tree above, but near to, the nest. The tree site of the nest was on a sand ridge that had a few big trees upon it, and also gave a good view of the adjoining country. When we were a quarter of a mile away, one bird was on the nest and the other was sitting about 30 feet up in a bare big gum some 80 yards away. They rose one after the other, soared at a great height, and finally disappeared from view. A Hawk, possibly a Nankeen Kestrel, attacked one of the Eagles as it was gaining height. This was the first occasion upon which I have seen a nest of this species in actual occupation.

Nankeen Kestrel.—Two nests were found. One in an old nest of a Crow, with four eggs. The other in a hollow of a gumtree with five eggs and the leg, wing, coracoid, and scapular bones of a Red Wattle-Bird; portion of the sternum of a bird, probably a Red Wattle-Bird; two tibio-tarsi and two humeri of another bird (not a Red Wattle-Bird); portion of a skull and lower jaw of a Nightjar (?); the skulls of seven lizards.

Dark Thornbill.—Five specimens obtained. The iris is yellowish white; bill upper dull black, lower base dark brown, tip black; legs and feet dull black; pharynx black; stomach contents of one bird were finely triturated insect remains. Two ♂ averaged total length, 9.92; spread, 14.85 cm. The two ♀ averaged total length, 9.6; spread, 14.15 cm. The other details of a ♂ were—wing, 4.70; tail, 3.90; tarsus, 1.75; bill, 0.60 cm. The call of this species is a weak imitation of that of the Eastern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*).

A nest was found by Dr. Morgan, the first one from the type locality—a domed nest a foot from the ground in a small *Casuarina*. It was constructed of old dried grasses with the entrance near the top and a prolongation of the lower lip of the opening extended 10 cm. downwards. Three young in the nest, and a bird flew from the spot.

Rufous Field-Wren.—Six specimens taken. No nests found, but young were seen. Five ♂ averaged total length 12.51, spread 17.58 cm.; whilst the ♀ was total length 13 cm., spread 16.40 cm. The other details of the ♀ were—wing, 5.40; tarsus, 1.90; bill, 1.20; tail, 4.80 cm. The contents of three stomachs were insect remains. ♂, iris brownish yellow, with an inner narrow darker line; bill upper dark brown, lower mandible light horn at base, dark horn at tip; legs fleshy brown; feet dark brown; pharynx flesh colour. This species

is closely allied to *Calamanthus winiam* (Campbell), the Winiam Field-Wren.

Mallee Emu-Wren.—Five specimens were taken, and two nests, each containing three eggs, were found. First one—A hooded nest with opening near the top built in a low bush (*Hibbertia*), four inches from the ground, and constructed externally of old dead grasses and decorated with the down of *Banksia ornata*. The nest was 14 cm. over all, the opening 5 x 5 cm. It was lined with small feathers (six of a *Neophema* Parrot and one of a Shy Ground-Wren were identified), down of *Banksia*, and a little sheep's wool. This nest was found by Dr. Morgan, and the honour of finding the first one of this species in South Australia belongs to him. Second One—A domed nest with opening towards the top built in a dwarf *Casuarina* in a small clump of grasstrees (10 x 6 feet). It was 6 inches from the ground, 14 cm. height over all, and 9 cm. width at the broadest part. It was constructed of very dried grasses, and lined with feathers—three of the Painted Quail, one of a *Neophema* Parrot, 66 small grey feathers of Emu (many 17 cm. in length), one of a Shy Ground-Wren, some rabbits' fur, sheep's wool, one thistle-down, and much *Banksia* down. A little *Banksia* down was on the outside of the nest. The writer found this nest about fifteen minutes later than the first one. The eggs have a smooth and slightly glossy surface, the ground colour white, with deep reddish brown spots forming a ring near the larger end, and they measure (1) 1.65 x 1.20; (2) 1.60 x 1.15; (3) 1.60 x 1.20 cm. A ♂ had iris dark brown; bill upper dull black, lower mandible light horn at base, dull black at the tip, legs and feet light brown, soles yellow; pharynx very light flesh; eyelids white; total length, 13; spread, 10.30; wing, 3.90; tail, 8.00; tarsus, 1.50; bill, 0.70 cm. Stomach contents: elytra and legs of beetles and two almost perfect beetles. A ♀, soft parts similar, but bill dark horn; total length, 15.60 cm.; spread, 11.3 cm. Stomach contents: full of insect remains, chiefly beetles. The length of the tail was 10.60 cm., and that of a male in the S.A. Museum from Coombe is 9.20 cm. The barbules of the feathers appear closer set in the tail of the male than in that of the female. The call of this species is usually one of the faintest in the scrub, and only once can I positively say I heard it. We had surrounded a little knoll, and I heard a bird give a warning call a few times. It sounded just like the calling of a cricket.