

Report on Bird Life in Central Australia and Northern Australia.

By R. E. P. Osborne.

During a trip I made to Central Australia and Northern Australia in July and August, 1930, although my object primarily was to look into the mining position, I was fortunately able to devote a little time to the study of bird life at my several camping spots.

My first camp was at Carter's Station, about 132 miles north of Alice Springs, and some 10 miles west of Central Mount Stuart. This is a very dry spot, and no permanent water is to be found for many miles. Mr. Carter has put down a well and struck good water at a depth of 40 feet. In the early morning and late in the evening, I noted the following birds come to the troughs for a drink:—Shell Parrots and Zebra Finches in hundreds; Cockatoo Parrots, Crested Pigeons, and Galahs in large numbers. During a day's motor run through the country we flushed scores of the Little Brown Quail—a small bird very like the Button Quail. Strange to say, although I travelled

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some hundreds of miles further north, I saw this Little Quail on only one other occasion. At night I heard the Stone-Curlew's weird cry, but, unfortunately, did not see this bird during the day.

At Barrow Creek, 186 miles north of Alice Springs, I noted large numbers of Shell Parrots, Cockatoo Parrots, Zebra Finches, Diamond Doves, Galahs, and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos.

Wycliffe Swamp, about 250 miles north of Alice Springs, when I first visited it, must have been quite a mile in length, but it is fast drying up. I was so charmed with this spot, which, by the way, is some miles off the beaten track, that I decided to stay the day. The bird life here was wonderful—Black Duck, Grey Teal, Whistling Duck, the Little Pink-eared Duck, White-eyed Duck, Maned Geese, Native Companions, Little Egrets, White-fronted Heron, Pelican, White-necked Heron, Yellow-legged Spoonbills, Straw-necked Ibis, Spur-winged Plover, Galahs, Shell Parrots, Zebra Finches, Diamond Doves, Crested Pigeons, Bronzewing Pigeons, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, Willie Wagtails, White-fronted Chats, White-browed Babbler, Crested Bellbird, and Hawks of several varieties. At night one found it hard to sleep, owing to the continual weird cries of the Stone-Curlew. I estimated there must have been a colony of quite a score of these birds close to our camp.

Tennant's Creek was our next place of call. As our stay here was short, I had no time to study the birds. In crossing a creek, however, we noticed about a score of Spinifex Rock-Pigeons close to the water.

At No. 4 Bore, some miles north of Newcastle Waters, I noticed Black Hearts, Masked and Double-bar Finches in large numbers. The Bronzewing Pigeon was very plentiful, as were also Crested Pigeons and Peaceful Doves. No Diamond Doves. I particularly noted that, whereas Diamond Doves were to be seen in large numbers from Alice Springs to, say, Tennant's Creek, I don't recollect seeing one after we left that place.

We spent a day at the Warlock, a large sheet of water situated about 60 miles north of Birdum. Birdum, I might mention, is the southern terminus of the Northern Territory Railway. At this spot we saw several Jabirus, at least 20 Native Companions, Pelicans, Little Egrets, Black and White Geese, Black and Little Pied Shags, Straw-necked Ibis, Black Duck, Grey Teal, Spur-winged Plover, Yellow-legged Spoonbills,

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and Black-fronted Dotterels, also Murray Magpies, Wood-Swallows (Masked and Dusky), Peaceful Doves, Galahs, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, Blue Mountain and Hooded Parrots.

At Frew's Pond, situated north of Newcastle Waters, we saw nine White-headed Stilts.

At Lake Woods, some 10 miles from Powell Creek, we saw large numbers of Black-and-White Geese. I am informed that this sheet of water is about 40 miles in circumference.

We heard the Stone-Curlew at every camping-place from Alice Springs to the Warlock, a distance of about 700 miles.

Although I travelled some 2,000 miles beyond Alice Springs during my two trips in May, July, and August last, I regret to say I saw only one Kangaroo and two Emus and six Bustards. No doubt the drought has killed off large numbers of Kangaroos.

It is my intention to pay another visit to Central Australia and Northern Australia immediately the rainy season is over, when I purpose devoting the whole of my time to the study of the bird life.

The scientific and vernacular names of the above-mentioned species are as follow:—*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*, Emu; *Turnix velox*, Little Quail, Button Quail; *Phaps chalcoptera*, Common Bronzewing; *Lophophaps plumifera*, Plumed Pigeon, Spinifex Rock-Pigeon; *Ocyphaps lophotes*, Crested Pigeon; *Geopelia placida*, Peaceful Dove; *Geopelia cuneata*, Diamond Dove; *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Black Cormorant; *Microcarbo melanoleucus*, Little Pied Cormorant; *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Pelican; *Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*, Spur-winged Plover; *Charadrius melanops*, Black-fronted Dotterel; *Himantopus leucocephalus*, White-headed Stilt; *Burhinus magnirostris*, Southern Stone-Curlew; *Eupodotis australis*, Bustard; *Grus rubicundus*, Brolga, Native Companion; *Threskiornis spinicollis*, Straw-necked Ibis; *Platalea flavipes*, Yellow-legged Spoonbill; *Xenorhynchus asiaticus*, Jabiru; *Egretta garzetta*, Little Egret; *Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*, White-faced Heron; *Notophoxyx pacifica*, White-necked (Pacific) Heron; *Anseranas semipalmata*, Pied (Black-and-White) Goose; *Chenonetta jubata*, Maned Goose, Wood-Duck; *Anas superciliosa*, Black Duck; *Querquedula gibberifrons*, Grey Teal; *Dendrocygna arcuata*, Whistling Tree-Duck; *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*, Pink-eared Duck; *Nyroca australis*, White-eyed Duck, Hardhead; Hawks species; *Trichoglossus moluccanus*, Blue Mountain (Rainbow) Lorikeet;

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Psephotus dissimilis, Hooded Parrot; *Calyptorhynchus banksi*, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo; *Kakatoe roseicapilla*, Galah; *Leptolophus hollandicus*, Cockatoo-Parrot, Cockatiel; *Melopsittacus undulatus*, Budgerygah, Shell Parrot; *Rhipidura leucophrys*, Willie Wagtail; *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Magpie-Lark, Murray Magpie; *Oreoica gutturalis*, Crested Bellbird; *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-browed Babbler; *Epthianura albifrons*, White-fronted Chat; *Artamus personatus*, Masked Wood-Swallow; *Artamus cyanopterus*, Dusky Wood-Swallow; *Taeniopygia castanotis*, Zebra (Chestnut-eared) Finch; *Steganopleura bichenovii*, Banded (Double-bar) Finch; *Peophila acuticauda*, Long-tailed Finch, Black Heart; *Peophila personata*, Masked Finch.
