
*PARSONS—Birds Near Mouth of Murray.***Birds Observed Near Mouth of River Murray.**

By F. E. Parsons.

It has been my custom for several years to spend the Christmas week at Middleton, and each year several visits are paid to a teatree swamp close by, and situated about three miles west of the mouth of the River Murray, to observe the birds which are evidently attracted by the plentiful supply of food.

In years of average rainfall the swamp is practically dry by the end of December, but this year (1932) the rainfall was above the average, and about 40 acres were covered with fresh water at Christmas time. This attracted many species of swimming and wading birds; some days there were upwards of 100 Ducks on the swamp, principally Grey Teal, but with a fair number of Black Ducks and three or four pairs of Mountain Ducks. There were about 30 Grebes, all Hoary-headed species. They had evidently nested on the swamps, as young birds were among their number. Although they relied on their powers of swimming chiefly to move about the swamp, yet several times three or four birds would take to the wing and fly just above the surface of the water for three or four chains. If my visit caught them unawares when they were close to the bank, they would often sink the whole of the body below the surface with just the head and the neck showing above. In this way they were difficult to locate. A systematic record of the birds observed was not taken, but the following list comprises the most interesting and the majority of the species observed during the last three or four years:—

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Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—Were frequently flushed in the paddocks. These birds were plentiful during the spring and summer of 1932. When walking over the stubble paddocks many nests were noticed containing broken eggshells where the young had hatched.

Brush Bronzewing (*Phaps elegans*).—Several pairs nest in the teatree bordering the swamp.

Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*).—Some years two or three birds may be seen. Until lately I considered this Pigeon to be a northern bird, never seen as far south as Adelaide, but it is no doubt established in the south now and occurs even in the South-East of our State.

Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*).—At times can be surprised and seen on the margin of the water.

Black-tailed Native-Hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*).—If water is in the swamp these birds are always to be seen. They keep in small flocks, and often wander into the grass four or five chains from water, but run or fly to cover as soon as they discover your presence.

Coot (*Fulica atra*).—Sometimes seen when the water is deep.

Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*).—To be seen whenever sufficient water is left in the swamp. The habit of submerging the body and only leaving the small head and thin neck above water, as previously mentioned, is a very effective method of concealing their presence, especially if twigs or small bushes are dotted about in the shallow water.

Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax ater* and *Microcarbo melanoleucus*).—Often seen perched on half-submerged fence posts or dead teatree boughs.

Marsh Tern (*Chlidonias leucopareia*), Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*).—Both these Terns have been noticed flying over the swamp.

Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).

Red-kneed Dotterel (*Erythrogonys cinctus*).

Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*).

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).

Hooded Dotterel (*Charadrius cucullatus*).

Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*).

Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*).

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White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*).—Occasionally seen.

Red-necked Stint (*Erolia ruficollis*).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Erolia acuminata*).—This and the foregoing Stint are there in large numbers.

Australian Snipe (*Capella hardwicki*).—Two birds were flushed in 1930 from sword-grass growing in water about an inch deep.

Australian Pratincole (*Stiltia isabella*).—I was very surprised in December, 1932, to see a solitary bird of this species on the flat grassy land which had been under water earlier in the season. I noticed the single bird on three consecutive days. It was very shy and would not permit a close inspection. It is rarely this bird gets so far south. Attempts to secure the bird for a specimen on the last day were unsuccessful, owing to a poor firearm and the wariness of the bird.

White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*).

Pacific Heron (*Notophoxyx pacifica*).

Nankeen Night-Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*).

Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*).

Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).

Grey Teal (*Querquedula gibberifrons*).

Hardhead (*Nyroca australis*).

Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*).

Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*).—Have noticed this bird flying over the straw paddocks.

Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*).—I have often seen one or two very dark-coloured Falcons which, I think, are referable to this species.

Nankeen-Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*).

Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).

Elegant Parrot (*Neophema elegans*).

Rock Parrot (*Neophema petrophila*).—The Elegant Parrot is often seen in the teatree, and occasionally the Rock Parrot is with them.

Shell Parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—Some years this little Parrot flies about in small flocks.

Fork-tailed Swift (*Micropus pacificus*).—The specimen of this species in my collection was secured from this locality. The birds were very numerous and flying just above the teatree swamps.

Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*).—I have seen young birds of this species, which had left the nest, being fed by the Striped Honeyeater, the Singing Honeyeater, the Black-and-White Fantail.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).

Fairy Martin (*Hylochelidon ariel*).

Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*).

Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*).

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*).

Little Thornbill (*Acanthiza nana*).

Rufous Field-Wren (*Calamanthus campestris*).—Birds from this district are identical with those from Port Augusta, yet the Field-Wren found on the other side of the River is the species *C. fuliginosus*.

Honeyeaters always found in the teatree are:—

Striped Honeyeater (*Plectorhyncha lanceolata*).

Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*).

Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*).
