

*BOEHM—Ornithological Observations.***Ornithological Observations in the Sutherlands and Mount Mary District, S.A.**

By E. F. Boehm.

During the period that has elapsed since my last notes were compiled (see "South Australian Ornithologist," Vol. X, 1930, p. 232), I have given considerable time to checking the existing records of species in the district, many of which were not made with a specimen in hand. Specimens of some of these and other doubtful species have now been collected, and the data thus obtained, besides substantiating the previous records, have enabled me to add several new species to my published lists.

Coturnix pectoralis, Stubble Quail.—A limited number was seen in 1930, but in the spring of 1931 this Quail was fairly common. Contents of the crop of a female taken in November, 1930, comprised seeds of *Lithospermum arvense* (Sheep-weed), which is a weed in crops in some seasons. During 1932 Stubble Quails were in larger numbers than ever before, and several sets of eggs were brought in to me.

Turnix velox, Little Quail.—Occasionally noted during 1930, and was commonly met with in the spring of 1931 and 1932. Many nests containing eggs and numerous young birds were seen.

Pedionomus torquatus, Plain-Wanderer.—A new record. On 30th December, 1931, a female in immature plumage was secured in a wheat crop near Sutherlands.

Geopelia placida, Peaceful Dove.—One was seen, also heard, at a deserted homestead about a mile and a half south of Sutherlands on 31st October, 1930.

Geopelia cuneata, Diamond-Dove.—A new record? A male was taken on 17th November, 1931, in scrub about five miles north-east of Sutherlands. It was exceedingly wary, and great difficulty was experienced in stalking it; nevertheless, until I can secure a further specimen, there is a possibility of this one having escaped from captivity, even though no report of its loss has been heard.

Microcarbo melanoleucus, Little Pied Cormorant.—A new record. Two were secured at the homestead in August, 1932.

Chlidonias leucopareia, Marsh Tern.—A new record. Two were first observed on 3rd January, 1931, at a dam two-and-a-half miles east of Sutherlands, skimming and hovering over the

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water; later they flew to another dam half-a-mile away, where they were collected.

Larus novae-hollandie, Silver Gull.—One was secured on 22nd July, 1931. It is the first authentic record of the species here. Prior to that date I had numerous reports of Gulls on dams in the district, but no bird had been seen by me. Another bird was observed on 5th March, 1932.

Zonifer tricolor, Banded Plover.—An astonishing display of ferocity on the part of one of these Plovers was witnessed on 5th September, 1930. After persistently attacking a sheep, the bird settled on the ground a few feet ahead, and flapped its wings almost in the animal's face. A search was made for the nest, and it was discovered several yards distant, and contained four eggs. On 22nd June, 1931, I rescued a chick under circumstances which may be of interest. A Grey Butcher-Bird (*Crocaticus torquatus*) was molesting the young Plover, whose parents were in turn attacking the offender and crying out angrily. When I arrived on the scene the Butcher-Bird flew away, and the chick squatted flat on the ground, from which position I picked it up and carried it a short distance into an open paddock, where the old birds quickly rejoined it, and induced it to go farther into the open, and thus away from the fringe of mallee, where the attack occurred.

Peltohyas australis, Australian Dotterel.—In September, 1930, an adult with four chicks was observed—the first occasion I had noted this Dotterel producing more than three offspring at a time.

Burhinus magnirostris, Southern Stone-Curlew.—Heard calling at night at very rare intervals in summer time. Old residents say that Stone-Curlews were fairly numerous in the early days, and that their decimation coincided with the multiplication of the introduced Fox.

Notophox novae-hollandiae, White-faced Heron.—One bird has frequented the dam near the house. It was presumably catching yabbies, which are abundant there.

Chenopsis atrata, Black Swan.—Nine were seen flying overhead in bright moonlight at 12 midnight on 19th June, 1932.

Anas superciliosa, Black Duck.—Six were noted on a dam on 3rd October, 1932.

Circus assimilis, Spotted Harrier.—Occasionally seen over wheat crops in search of Quail and Pipits (*Anthus australis*),

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remains of which are often found after a Harrier has settled in the crop. A nest containing four eggs was found in September, 1932.

Accipiter cirrocephalus, Collared Sparrowhawk.—A new record. Two were along the Deep Creek on 27th December, 1930, and one was secured.

Hieraaetus morphnoides.—Single birds put in an appearance on infrequent occasions, but do not stay long.

Elanus axillaris, Black-shouldered Kite.—A new record. On 11th August, 1933, a male was found dead under a fence between Sutherlands and Bower.

Falco longipennis, Little Falcon.—I saw one chase a Pipit and catch it on 9th May, 1931. The chase lasted about a minute, and judging from the behaviour of the latter it appeared a healthy bird. This Falcon is very partial to domestic Pigeons, and kills many at the homestead every year. On 25th May, 1933, while driving a combine-reaper, a bird of this species flushed three Pipits near the horse team, and began chasing one bird. The Pipit settled on the chains between the horses on several occasions, and eventually flew to the road about 15 chains distant, and hid in some Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) at the base of some Eucalypts.

Ninox boobook, Boobook Owl.—Two nests, each in the trunk of a large Eucalypt, were found in 1932.

Tyto alba, Barn Owl.—One was secured on 21st September, 1932. Another bird was observed a few days later.

Kakatoe galerita, White Cockatoo.—A bird was seen by Master Clarrie Boehm on 17th October, 1932. It was flying about in scrub near Mr. P. R. Schiller's homestead, and was later observed on a haystack. Mr. R. Winter, of Bower, informed me that he shot a bird out of a flock of about a dozen some years ago.

Kakatoe roseicapilla, Galah.—On 1st October, 1932, a nest with four eggs was found in a hollow mallee. This Cockatoo, which is now tolerably common, first arrived here in 1923, though an isolated example was observed in 1918.

Neophema chrysostoma, Blue-winged Parrot.—A new record. Six or seven were noted in a *Casuarina* scrub at intervals during October, 1930, and a specimen was taken. Seeds of a plant locally known as "wild cress" (*Stenopetalum lineare*) formed the bulk of their food, and the crops of specimens (including

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N. elegans, Elegant Parrot) contained only "wild cress" seeds. About twenty birds were seen on 11th October, 1931.

Melopsittacus undulatus, Budgerygah.—Very common in December, 1931. I have never seen larger flocks than were encountered then. There were certainly more than a thousand birds in the largest flocks. They did more damage to wheat crops than House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) ever do. In gullies, where the wheat ripened later than the rest of the crop, many heads were practically stripped of grain. Fortunately, this only applied to areas bordered by scrub, there being little damage in open paddocks.

Eurostopodus guttatus, Spotted Nightjar.—Four or five birds have been noted in areas where mallee shoots are growing. A young bird was found by Mr. H. E. Polst in October, 1931, and brought to me. The old bird did the "wounded bird" act while Mr. Polst was at the nesting site.

Chalcites basalis, Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo.—Often seen during spring in the haunts of the Blue Wrens and Thornbills. On 2nd October, 1932, a chick was found in the nest of a Chestnut-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*) situated in a crevice in a mallee trunk. It was the sole occupant of the nest. The only other Cuckoo noted during the last two seasons was the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*).

Micropus pacificus, Fork-tailed Swift.—A new record. Five out of a small flock were identified by their long rakish wings and white rump at 8 a.m. on 16th January, 1932. It was a sultry morning with a cool wind, and the Swifts were flying about over a paddock, sometimes coming easily within gunshot, but time did not permit me to collect a specimen. About twenty were flying about over a paddock and scrub two miles east of Sutherlands at 2 p.m. on 6th February, 1933. The weather was sultry, with a cool wind from the west, and the birds sometimes came within a few yards of the ground.

Hylochelidon ariel, Fairy Martin.—A new record.—Two pairs were noted on 24th November, 1930, along the Deep Creek, south-east of Sutherlands. Two colonies nested along the bank on 25th September, 1932, and nine nests in one colony contained eggs.

Petroica multicolor, Scarlet Robin.—Six were noted in a gully between Sutherlands and Bower on 29th June, 1930. Three were males with conspicuous white frontal spots.

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Petroica goodenovii, Red-capped Robin.—A nest was found three-and-a-half feet up in a Native Peach tree (*Eucarya acuminata*) on 2nd October, 1932. It contained two slightly incubated eggs.

Lalage tricolor, White-winged Triller.—Has been numerous during spring in the past three seasons, and several nests have been noted, none seen this season (1933).

Cinclosoma castanotum, Chestnut Quail-Thrush.—Two heavily incubated eggs, which were brought to Sutherlands by a woodcarter from about twelve miles north-east of the town, were shown to me in October, 1930. A set of two eggs was taken on 3rd October, 1931, from a nest of bark under a *Zygophyllum fruticosum* in open scrub.

Pomatostomus ruficeps, Chestnut-crowned Babbler.—Several nests with eggs have been found during the past three seasons.

Epthianura tricolor, Crimson Chat.—Numerous between October and December of 1930 and 1931. Several nests containing three or four eggs were found in Bluebush (*Kochia sedifolia*) and Australian Boxthorn (*Lycium australe*).

Epthianura aurifrons, Orange Chat.—Five or six were seen in a flock of White-fronted Chats (*E. albifrons*) in a fallow paddock during May, 1933.

Acanthiza nana, Little Thornbill.—A few of these locally rare birds have been observed along the Deep Creek during the last two years.

Pyrrholaemus brunneus, Redthroat.—A new record. One was singing in a Sheep-Bush about five miles north-east of Sutherlands on 30th June, 1933. This is the only bird I have ever seen during my years of work among the fauna of the Murray Flats. The song reminded me of the Horsfield Bush-lark (*Mirafra javanica*) and the Shy Ground-Wren (*Hylacola cauta*), which latter bird it also resembled in its habits. Seen from the front the bird suggested to me a miniature male Gilbert Whistler (*Pachycephala inornata*).

Cinclorhamphus matheusi, Rufous Songlark.—A new record. On 8th October, 1930, two pairs, the males of which were singing in the treetops, were noted in a gully between Sutherlands and Bower. Between September and November, 1931 and 1932, these Songlarks were numerous in various localities, and several nests were discovered.

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Artamus melanops, Black-faced Wood Swallow—Small companies were occasionally seen. They are never as numerous as the Dusky (*A. cyanopterus*), Masked (*A. personatus*), and the White-browed Wood-Swallows (*A. superciliosus*).

Zosterops halmaturina, Grey-backed Silvereye.—Observed a flock of about twenty in a Sheep-bush scrub on 13th June, 1933. The species does not breed here.

Plectorhyncha lanceolata, Striped Honeyeater.—An immature female was taken at the Saltwater Creek on 28th February, 1931. The species is rare, and has not been known to breed here.

Myzomela nigra, Black Honeyeater?—On 16th September, 1931, a Honeyeater resembling the species was seen in some flowering *Eremophila oppositifolia*, five miles north-east of Sutherland's, but I hesitate to make a definite record.

Gliciphila albifrons, White-fronted Honeyeater.—Many in flowering *Eremophila* in the spring of 1930-1-2-3. Several nests have been found in boxthorn,

Certhionyx variegatus, Pied Honeyeater.—I noted three pairs of this Honeyeater in Casuarina scrub. Two nests were found in October, 1930. One was situated in a Native Cherry (*Exocarpus aphylla*) on the north-eastern side, and five-and-a-half feet up. It contained three fresh eggs. The other nest was in a Black Oak on the northern side, and about seven feet from the ground. The eggs were two in number, and were partially incubated. In each case the nest was built of thin *Zygophyllum Billardieri* branchlets, lined with stems of *Stenopetalum lineare* and *Stipa* awns. Dimensions of nests—width, 6.5 cm.; depth, 3 cm.

Meliphaga virescens, Singing Honeyeater.—Nests found in Sheep-Bush, generally four to six feet from the ground. One nest in *Malva parviflora* was two feet from the ground.

Meliphaga ornata, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater.—Nests found in Sheep-Bush, *Acacia colletioides*, and mallee shoots.

Meliphaga plumula, Yellow-fronted Honeyeater.—Four or five birds noted in mallee shoots. Its calls are somewhat like those of the Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*). Two specimens were taken.

Meliphaga penicillata, White-plumed Honeyeater.—Nest with three young about eight feet up in a Eucalypt at the

Saltwater Creek in 1931. This was the first time I had seen them nesting here.

Pardalotus xanthopygus, Yellow-tailed Pardalote.—Several nesting burrows were found in the spring of 1932. Each was situated at the base of a mallee shoot.

Meliornis novae-hollandiae, Yellow-winged Honeyeater.—Observed at intervals during spring, summer, and autumn of 1930-31. Not found breeding here.

Mirafra javanica, Horsfield Bushlark.—Few observed. A male, the first authentic record, was collected on 16th September, 1932.

Cracticus torquatus, Grey Butcher-Bird.—Visit the sheds and stables from time to time and destroy mice and Sparrows.

Gymnorhina tibicen, Black-backed Magpie.—Several nests with eggs were found.
