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*SUTTON—Additional Records for S.A.*

### Additional Records for South Australia.

By J. Sutton.

*Rhipidura rufifrons*, Rufous Fantail.

On 10th December, 1933, Mr. Walter J. Harvey, of Coombe, S.A., 117 miles in a direct line south-east of Adelaide, and on the main railway line to Melbourne, secured a specimen of this species. It was ♀; iris, dark brown, almost black; legs and feet, leaden grey, showing pink; bill, black; inside mouth, dirty cream, tinged pink; total length, 17.0 cm.; spread of wings, 19.6 cm.; weight, 9 grammes. The bird was found in dense mallee. He watched it for a considerable time, during which it did not appear to utter a call, and confined its feeding amongst the sticks under the mallee and the leaves and rubbish on the ground. At times it perched on a twig without sound or movement. He thinks he saw this bird amongst some pampas grass some years ago. Leach's short description is—"crown, hind neck brown; forehead, lower back, base tail rust-red; throat, centre-abdomen white; chest black; flanks, under base tail fawn; female smaller." The Official Checklist gives the distribution as "Celebes to New Guinea, North-Western Australia (Napier Broome Bay) to North Queensland to Victoria." North states—"This species chiefly frequents humid mountain ranges and the rich coastal brushes during spring and summer, leaving after the breeding season is over early in autumn, for more open parts of the country." This specimen was evidently a straggler to this State, and this is the first record of its occurrence therein.

*Ixobrychus minutus*, Little Bittern.

On 18th September, 1932, Dr. A. M. Morgan, Mr. J. Neil McGilp, and I were visitors to "Buckland Park," where, with Mr. E. A. Brooks, we worked at the artificial lake. We had with us Mr. Brooks's pointer bitch, and, although we visitors had misgivings about having her with us, she turned out to be a wonderful help, and did splendid work. My notes are as

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follow:—Towards the north-western end of the lake, some 25 yards from the water and near a lignum (*Muehlenbeckia*) with high grass at the foot, the pointer flushed a bird. I was nearest to the place, and was watching the bitch working. Mr. McGilp was about 20 yards to my right, then Mr. Brooks and Dr. Morgan searching the lignums at the water's edge. The bird flew past me and Mr. McGilp and dropped down about 150 yards away in some lignum at the water's edge beyond Dr. Morgan. Mr. Brooks and Dr. Morgan missed this flight, although Mr. McGilp and I called out. The bird was new to me. With the field-glasses I could see that the upper parts of the wings were yellowish or buffy, with the back black, and it had the flight of a Heron. We pointed out where it had alighted, so Dr. Morgan took the pointer with him and walked towards the spot. The bitch flushed the bird again, and it flew straight across the lake. Dr. Morgan identified it as the Little Bittern. As it flew to the other side of the lake, distant about three-quarters of a mile, I watched it through the field-glasses, noted the colours again, and noticed that its wing-beats agreed in time with those of some Marsh Terns working over there. On examining the specimens of the Little Bittern in the S.A. Museum, the above colours are similar. The bird was without doubt one of the species. This is a new record for South Australia. We were at the lake again on 30th October, 1932, accompanied by the pointer, but the bird was not seen. Gould's description of the species is as follows:—"The sexes differ considerably from each other, the female being mottled and of a smaller size than the male. The male has the crown of the head, back, and tail bronzy greenish black; front of the neck buff, gradually passing into rich deep chestnut on the sides of the head and back of the neck; down the centre of the chin and neck in front a broad irregular stripe of reddish brown; on either side of the chest a patch of black feathers margined with deep buff; all the under-surface pale buff; wing-coverts deep buff, with a patch of rich chestnut on the shoulder and a wash of the same colour along the edge of the wing; primaries slaty black; space round the eye, bill and feet, yellow; culmen nearly black; irides, orange. The female has the head and back chestnut; wing-coverts, very deep tawny, passing into chestnut on the tips of the coverts and secondaries; primaries grey, tipped with brown; tail black; sides of the neck pale chestnut; front of the throat and the under-surface white, with a stripe of tawny down the middle, and a small streak of brown

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in the centre of each feather, the brown hue predominating and forming a conspicuous mark down the throat." North gives the measurements as—"total length in the flesh, 11.5 inches; wing, 5.2; tail, 2.0; bill, 1.7; tarsus, 1.7." The Official Checklist quotes the distribution as—"Europe, Africa, Asia, coast North Australia, Eastern Australia, South Western Australia, New Zealand."

On 11th December, 1933, Mr. J. B. Hood, of Bool Lagoon, S.E., S.A., wrote to me:—"On 12th November, 1933, I flushed three Little Bitterns from a small clump of reeds in the teatree (in the Lagoon). I noticed the omission of this species in the List of the Birds of South Australia, second edition. Is it because it has not been recorded before? I have noticed eggs of this species at Bool Lagoon." In replying, I sent him particulars of our sight record as above, and asked him for full particulars about his observations at Bool Lagoon. He has very kindly sent me the following letter, dated 18th December, 1933, wherein it will be seen that, although he did not report the occurrence, he had seen the species in South Australia long before our record:—"The first birds that came before my notice were recorded in January, 1930. The two birds were the first of this species that I had ever observed, and it was not until March, 1932, that I was absolutely certain of their identity. On 8th January, 1931, I found a nest of this species containing four heavily incubated eggs. The notes I have, referring to this nest, are as follows—a frail platform of reed flags and small reeds placed in the upright stems of bamboo reeds two feet above water. In March, 1932, date of day uncertain, was the next occasion that I recorded more than one bird in a day. This was when I had been hunting foxes in the reeds in the Bool Lagoon. Five Little Bitterns were flushed from the reeds by the dogs, one, a male, was captured by a dog. This dog would also try to catch the Brown Bittern. It was after having this specimen that I have been certain of the identity of this species. Mr. H. Collins, of Edenhope, V., recently visited Bool Lagoon, and he also was certain of their identity, as he has before been acquainted with the Little Bittern in Western Australia. We visited a small cluster of bulrushes growing in the teatrees on the 12th November, 1933, and from these we flushed three birds of this species, one male and two females. It was in this same clump of bulrushes that I have noted many single birds during the past three years. On 16th December, 1933, I visited these bulrushes and flushed two birds.

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a male and a female. I also found their nest, which contained three eggs slightly incubated. This is a small set, as Mr. Collins mentioned that sets of four, five, and six have been found. The nest was placed three feet above water on the dead stick of a teatree; the diameter of stick was two inches, and it entered the water nine feet away from the nest. This stick, as could be seen by the broken reeds on it, had been used as a means of ascension to the nest. The nest was of frail construction, composed of several leaves of the bulrush bent across the stick, and placed on top of this were several pieces of stinging nettle and a small quantity of a plant, which had dried to a dark brown colour; measurements of nest, 6 x 0 inches cavity, 6 x 1 inches over all.

*Numenius phaeopus*, Whimbrel.

This species was seen by me near Pelican Point, Outer Harbor, on the sandy shore left uncovered by the tide near the Port River channel. The dates, with the numbers noted in brackets, were—2nd July, 1932 (2); 12th January, 1933 (2); 30th January, 1933 (1); 10th June, 1933 (5); 12th August, 1933 (5); 26th August, 1933 (5); 7th October, 1933 (4); 28th October, 1933 (3); 25th November, 1933 (3). They are usually in company with the Eastern Curlews (*Numenius cyanopus*), but keep a little distance away from the latter, and remain for a brief period after the last Curlew has flown away. With the aid of field-glasses they can be picked out from the Curlews by their smaller size, shorter bill, and whitish rump, this last is readily noticed if the birds fly past. The curved bill of the Whimbrel is about three inches long, whilst that of the Curlew ranges from five to seven inches in length. On seven of the above occasions the Whimbrels called "tetty, tetty, tetty, tet" on flushing. Newton, in A Dictionary of Birds, states that in England the Whimbrel is "called in some parts Jack-Curlew, from its small size—May-fowl, from the month in which it usually arrives—and Titterel from one of its cries. Whimbrel, according to Skeat, is "the bird that keeps uttering a cry imitated by *whim*."

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To bring the second edition (Vol. IX, 1927, pp. 55-66) of my list of Birds of South Australia, up to date, the following additions and deletions should be made:—

Additions (11).—*Sterna striata*, White-fronted Tern; \**Sterna fuscata*, Sooty Tern; \**Numenius phaeopus*, Whimbrel; *Crocethia alba*, Sanderling; \**Ardea cinerea*, Grey Heron; *Ixobrychus minutus*, Little Bittern; *Rhipidura rufifrons*, Rufous Fantail; *Cinlosoma alisteri*, Nullarbor Quail-Thrush; *Pomatostomus rubeculus*, Red-breasted Babbler; *Amytornis whitei*, Rufous Grass-Wren; and *Struthidea cinerea*, Apostle Bird.

Deletions (2).—*Procellaria cinerea*, Grey Petrel; *Eurostopodus mystacalis*, White-throated Nightjar.

\* Sight records.