

HOOD—Birds in Bool Lagoon District.

The Birds in the Bool Lagoon District, S.E., S.A.

By J. B. Hood.

Letter of 9th January, 1934.—Since sending my last notes (pp. 186-187 of Part 5), I have found another nest of the Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*). This nest contained four eggs, incubation, .2, and was of different construction from those which I have described previously. It was in a very open position, being placed on a dry bough of a teatree growing in a clump of bulrushes, and was sheltered overhead by a green bough of teatree, but could be seen from a distance of about 12 feet. It was placed 2 feet 9 inches above the water, and could only be reached by the birds by flying. This seems to show that the Little Bittern must be a quick, active bird, as there was a fair quantity of material in the nest, which was composed externally of strips of teatree bark and small twigs of teatree, and internally of finer sticks of teatree and pieces of reed flags and stinging nettles. The measurements were—diameter, external, 8 inches; internal, 5; depth, external, 4½; internal, 1½. Two Little Bitterns flushed from the reeds in the vicinity of the nest. This nest was found on 30th December, 1933.

Two pairs of Black-shouldered Kites (*Elanus axillaris*) have been hunting the open paddocks here lately. Their movements appear to be similar to those of the Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*). I have noticed them with Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in their talons. If the two pairs are near each other a great deal of quarrelling occurs, and one's attention is attracted by their noise.

Letter of 3rd March, 1934.—The water is at present drying away from the banks of Bool Lagoon and Alick's Lagoon, and on the mud flats many flocks of different species were noticed feeding on a recent visit to the locality. The most common were the Spur-winged Plovers (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*). Five flocks were noted, and each flock was estimated to contain over 100 birds. They were very noisy when disturbed. White-faced Herons (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*) were very common, 87 being counted in one flock. Many small flocks and single birds were also noticed. A White-necked Heron (*Notophoxyx pacifica*) and six White Egrets (*Egretta alba*) were feeding in the shallow water. A short distance from the water 87 Brolgas, or Native Companions (*Grus rubicundus*) were settled, many going through their queer "dancing" antics. They left when

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disturbed. Many Ducks, probably all Black Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*), as well as many Black Swans (*Chenopsis atrata*) were on the water, well out from the shore. Near the Swans were many Grebes, probably all Little Grebes (*Podiceps ruficollis*). Small flocks of Red-necked Stints (*Erolia ruficollis*) were feeding amongst the short rushes in the water, and one flock of 17 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Erolia acuminata*) were identified. Red-capped Dotterels (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) were also in numbers, their white under plumage being easily noticed when they turned to run quickly to another spot. One pair of Black-fronted Dotterels (*C. melanops*) was seen. They were very quiet, and one could approach within a short distance of them. Several small flocks of Blue Bald Coots (*Porphyrio melanotus*) were surprised in the open spaces between the bulrushes. A fair number of White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) were noted, but four only of the Straw-necked Ibis (*T. spinicollis*) were seen. Spoonbills of both species were present, the Royal species (*Platalea regia*) being by far the more common. The Little Bitterns have left the bulrushes amongst the teatree, because of cattle breaking them down, and have possibly gone to the reeds, where I have found them before.

The following list contains particulars of the additional species of birds which have been noted in the Bool Lagoon and Joanna districts since the visit of "Dr. Morgan's party" in December, 1930, see "S.A. Ornithologist," Vol. XI, 1931, pp. 74-92:—

Emu (*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*).—Pairs, and sometimes small flocks, are met with on the open heath flats and timber ranges away from the plains.

Common and Brush Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera* and *P. elegans*).—The Common species seem to be the more plentiful.

Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*).—Small flocks are often noticed feeding in the timber on the ranges.

Brown Quail (*Synoicus australis*).— } Both these species are
Little Quail (*Turnix velox*).— } present, but are rarely
seen.

Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*).—First identified with certainty in November, 1933.

Black-tailed Native Hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*).—Often appear in flocks, but no nests have been found.

Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*).—Rare. One pair and three single birds only noticed.

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Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—Rare. Pairs and single birds noted, but only in the breeding season.

Red-capped Dotterel.—Common on mud flats and shores of swamps. Nests are sometimes found on stony shores.

Black-fronted Dotterel.—Is not often noted, but pairs are usually seen in the breeding season, but no nest has been found.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).—Common in the breeding season. Often birds make attempts at nesting, but they have never been known to be successful in hatching young. Swamp Harriers (*Circus approximans*), which are very common, have been seen robbing nests of their eggs.

Red-necked Stints.—Very rare. Small flocks are to be seen at present, but they have not been noted before.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.—Flocks of these birds usually appear at the end of winter.

Bustard (*Eupodotis australis*).—Very rare. It is three years since a bird of this species has been noted in this district. Old residents, however, say they were very common on the open plains years ago.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*).—Very rare. A flock of eleven are the only birds of this species that have been seen at Bool Lagoon.

White-necked Heron.—Rare. A few pairs breed in the big redgums growing in a swamp in this district.

White Egret.—Three pairs have been noted together, usually in company with Spoonbills, during the past six months, feeding in the shallow waters. They have never been found nesting.

Little Bittern.—Rare.

Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*).—A flock of seventeen were visitors here last winter, but are not here at present.

Maned Goose (*Chenonetta jubata*).—Not often seen. A few pairs breed in the hollows of gumtrees.

Chestnut Teal (*Querquedula castanea*), Blue-winged Shoveler (*Spatula rhynchotis*), Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*), Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*), Hardhead (*Nyroca australis*), and Blue-billed Duck (*Oxyura australis*) are all visitors to the district; several of these species also breed here.

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Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*).—Two birds only noted.

Australian Goshawk (*Astur novae-hollandiae*).—Common at present, but they seem to leave the district always about April.

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroactus audax*).—Rarely seen now. A few years ago they were very numerous, and many old nests are still to be seen. The rabbits were also very common, but are now rare, so it would seem as though the Eagle has left because of lack of these.

Black-shouldered Kite.—Was rarely seen, but appears to be becoming common, as about 15 birds have been noted during the past year.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).—Rare. Single birds of this species occasionally appear, and generally create a great disturbance among the smaller birds.

Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).—Is heard more often than it is seen.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*).—Common. Many dead birds of this species were found beneath the trees in which they had roosted. They were all in a very frail condition, and had probably come from another district.

Rainbow (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) and Little Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta pusilla*).—Are rare visitors to this district, generally arriving when the eucalypts are blossoming.

Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*).—A very rare visitor. Four birds have been noticed several times, but it is not known whether they reached here naturally or have escaped from captivity.

Budgerygah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—Have become very common during the past two summers; always in large flocks; no nests have been found.

Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*).—Common. Often heard calling softly at night.

Owlet Nightjar (*Aegothebes cristata*).—Common.

Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*).—Often heard calling, and is sometimes noted in the teatree growing in Bool Lagoon.

Fork-tailed Swift (*Micropus pacificus*).—Flocks sometimes appear in sultry weather. One flock was noted recently flying east to west.

Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) and Golden Bronze-Cuckoo (*Lamprococcyx plagosus*).—The latter has been identified by the eggs taken from Thornbills' (*Acanthiza*) nests.

Shy Ground-Wren (*Hylacola cauta*).—Rarely seen. A nest containing four young was found.

Brown Songlark (*Cinchorhamphus cruralis*).—Common in summer. Nests have been found.

Southern Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).—Rarely noticed, as it inhabits the cutting-grass tussocks growing in damp places in scrub country.

Mistletoe-Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*).—Noted only in the Joanna district in timber growing on sandy ridges. A great deal of mistletoe is to be found there.

White-eared (*Meliphaga leucotis*) and Yellow-faced (*M. chrysops*) Honeyeaters are both seen in the district at different periods.

Red Wattle-Bird (*Anthochaera carunculata*).—Not as common as the Brush species (*A. chrysoptera*).

Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*).—A single bird is noted at times, but the species is not common.

