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## Bird Notes.

By R. F. Brown.

A list of birds, with the number of individuals seen, noted in the Torrens Gorge from the afternoon of the 18th to the afternoon of the 19th January, 1936:—

Common Bronzewing, *Phaps chalcoptera* (1); Little Black Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax ater* (1), a dead body was found about fifteen feet from the edge of the river. It looked as though a fox had been at it; White-faced Heron, *Notophoyx novae-hollandiae* (1); Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Uroaetus audax* (2). These Eagles were first seen between 7.15 and 7.30 a.m. on 19th January, when they flew into a tree about fifteen feet high; after two minutes one bird flew out and landed on the hillside. In a minute or so it rose again, and its mate joined it. They then flew to a high hill and circled round its peak with a beautiful soaring flight. A White-backed Magpie chased one bird for a few

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seconds, and, although the Eagle flapped its wings very leisurely, the Magpie seemed to have difficulty in keeping pace with its giant opponent. The wedge-shaped tail was very conspicuous. An Eagle was seen at 11.30 a.m. about two miles away, probably one of this pair; Adelaide Rosella, *Platycercus adelaidae* (3); Laughing Kookaburra, *Dacelo gigas* (3); Welcome Swallow, *Hirundo neoxena* (5); Grey Fantail, *Rhipidura flabellifera* (2); Willie Wagtail, *Rhipidura leucophrys* (4); Scarlet Robin, *Petroica multicolor* (1) ♂; Magpie Lark, *Grallina cyanoleuca* (4); White-winged Triller, *Lalage tricolor* (1) ♂; Yellow-tailed Thornbill, *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* (5); Scrub-Wren, *Sericornis* sp. (4); Superb Blue-Wren, *Malurus cyaneus* (3) 1 ♂; White-throated Tree-creeper, *Climacteris leucophaea* (1); Grey-backed Silveryeye, *Zosterops halmaturina* (4); Singing Honeyeater, *Meliphaga virescens* (1); White-plumed Honeyeater, *Meliphaga penicillata* (3); Yellow-winged Honeyeater, *Meliornis novae-hollandiae* (2); Little Wattle-Bird, *Anthochaera chrysoptera* (1); Red Wattle-Bird, *Anthochaera carunculata* (3); Red-browed Finch, *Aegintha temporalis* (1); White-backed Magpie, *Gymnorhina hypoleuca* (8).

To ascertain what caused the noise when domestic pigeons rise from the ground, I repeated the experiment by whitening the shoulders and flights of a pigeon (instead of using mud). I found that the wings assuredly did clap above the bird's back. In the case of the flights the first two\* primaries only showed signs of contact with those on the opposite wing. A strip of whitening about two inches in length showed on those feathers, but they were only marked to within an inch of their tips.

On 17th February, 1936, I saw two young Major Mitchell Cockatoos (*Kakatoe leadbeateri*) in the birdshop in Rundle Street. They could not have been able to fly, if they had remained unmolested in the nest. Surely this is unusually late for this species to breed?†

On 18th February, 1936, on the Torrens River near the weir, a Black Swan‡ was seen with six cygnets about a fortnight

\* Ornithologically "the last two."

† The eggs recorded in this State in the S.A. Museum were taken in September and November. We have ascertained that the birds referred to were not obtained in South Australia.

‡ Eggs have been obtained in this State in February, April, August, September, October, and November. Both the broods mentioned by the writer are later than usual.—Eds.

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old, and almost as large as a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*). They were of a dusky grey colour in appearance, with black bills.

Birds noted during a fishing excursion opposite "French Tom's," at the back of Torrens Island in the Port River:—

Pied Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax varius* (11). Pelican, *Pelecanus conspicillatus* (3), in the company of the Swans. Usually there are some 30-40 Pelicans out there. Caspian Tern, *Hydroprogne caspia* (5); Crested Tern, *Sterna bergii* (7). A Tern of this species was seen to have an object, probably a fish, hanging lengthways from its bill. It was being closely chased by a Silver Gull. The Tern was uttering a squeaking noise like a young bird. As I had to attend to my crab-bait, I did not see which bird got the fish in the end. When a member of our party threw a piece of raw meat into the water, a Tern immediately dived for it and picked it up just as a Silver Gull picks up a crust. The Tern had obviously much difficulty in obtaining a good hold on the meat, because three or four times the meat slipped out of its bill and fell two or three inches before it was recovered in mid-air. Silver Gull, *Larus novae-hollandiae* (115). Most of them were feeding on the tidal flats; Eastern Curlew, *Numenius cyanopus* (9). Six of these birds were flying very low over the water in a W.N.W. direction in Indian file, a seventh bird was racing up a few hundred yards behind, apparently attempting to catch the main body up. White-faced Heron, *Notophox novae-hollandiae* (37). These were feeding on the tidal flats with the Silver Gulls. Black Swan, *Chenopsis atrata*, at least 150, probably more. They were swimming over the flats at high tide; at low water they simply stood there, flapping their wings at times. Although I was able to observe them almost all day, at no time did I notice them feeding. I have noticed the same peculiarity with the large flocks of Pelicans which sometimes frequent these parts. I have never seen Black Swans at this place before. Grey Teal, *Querquedula gibberifrons* (3). I was surprised at the small number of this species present, usually at this time of the year there is a large flock of the birds. *Corvus sp.* A flock of twenty-six birds of this genus flew from Torrens Island to the mainland.

On 25th February, 1936, at a stretch of reeds about a hundred yards in length in the Torrens River, near the weir, the following birds were seen:—Dusky Moorhen, *Gallinula tenebrosa* (17). Nine of these were immature birds, frontal plate greenish grey. Eastern Swamphen, *Porphyrio melanotus* (2). They

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were feeding together on a platform of reeds. When disturbed, one bird scrambled into the reeds behind it, whilst the other flew into the air and landed a few hundred yards down the river in the shallow water. Although I have seen dozens of these birds near Dry Creek, I have never at any time observed one swimming. Little Black Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax ater* (9) were in the company of 5 Little Pied Cormorants, *Microcarbo melanoleucus*. Black Duck, *Anas superciliosa* (1). Probably moulting, as it skulked into the reeds when I surprised it. Musk Duck, *Biziura lobata* (1) ♀. The first I have ever seen. When I swam after it, the bird submerged so deeply that its head and neck only appeared above water. Instead of diving when I approached closely, it swam away. Only when I kept my distance did it show its powers of diving. When diving it "rolled over" as a "porpoise" does. The bird's "Roman" bill, remindful of that of a Cape Barren Goose, was noticeable when at close quarters. Little Grebe, *Podiceps ruficollis* (2), in non-breeding plumage. They were rather dingy-looking birds, and not at all like the handsome little fellows I am accustomed to see. On 29th February the two Little Grebes were in the same place as before. Although they were watching me when I swam towards them, they did not take alarm until I was fifteen feet away, when the one furthest from me dived suddenly. The other rose off the water at the same instant and flew into the middle of the river (about seventy-five yards); quite a considerable amount of white was visible on the wings. When in flight the legs, instead of being stretched out in the accepted manner, or at least kept together, were stuck out at an absurd angle, in fact, almost at right angles to the body. Its companion flew in the same manner when I scared it off the water. A beautiful shade of red, tinged chestnut, was present on the bird's cheek and upper neck.

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