

Bird Observations at Morgan.

By D. W. Brummitt.

I stayed at Mr. A. H. Brockmeyer's station, Nor'-West Bend, four miles east of Morgan, from 18th November to 2nd December, 1936. During that period a fair number of species of birds was seen, and a few extra ones, which Mr. Brockmeyer had noticed, but had left the district at the time of my visit have been included.

The station consists of river flats, which are mainly under irrigation (although there is quite a large area not under irrigation and fairly thickly covered with trees) and higher country, which is almost typical dry north-eastern country. A few mallee trees are growing on this dry country. On the flats are boxtrees, while along the river bank and around the edge of the flats are redgums. A species of teatree is present, and forms almost a complete single line along the bank of the river a few yards from the water's edge.

Directly opposite the homestead, which is on the northern side (right bank) of the River Murray, is a large swamp. This now receives the seepage from the Cadell irrigation area, and in summer the water has a high salinity, with the result that all the trees in the swamp have been killed, whilst those along the bank look unhealthy—in direct contrast to those on the northern bank of the river.

It was particularly noticed that a species would be common in a certain spot one day and none would be there on another occasion, or another species not present the first day would be present and common. For example:—(a) One day the dry-country was visited, and amongst the birds seen were quite a number of

the Chestnut-tailed Thornbills, whilst some days later not one was to be seen there, but the Eastern Whiteface had appeared in some numbers. Chestnut-tailed Thornbills were later noticed on the non-irrigated scrub area of the flats, and they stayed there for some days. (b) Except for the Whistling Eagle, very few Hawks were observed, but on one day a Little Falcon, a Brown Hawk, and Nankeen Kestrels were all seen. Mr. Brockmeyer said that he had frequently noticed these periodic and spasmodic appearances and disappearances of species.

On several occasions Mr. Brockmeyer has seen some *Neophema* Parrots, but he was unable to identify the species. They did not appear whilst I was there. *Coturnix pectoralis*, Stubble Quail.—Present in fair numbers in crops and on the irrigated land. *Geopelia placida*, Peaceful Dove; *Geopelia cuneata*, Diamond Dove; *Ocyphaps lophotes*, Crested Pigeon.—These three species were all common, especially along the banks of the river. They nest in the teatrees along the bank, and many old nests were seen. *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Black Cormorant; *Phalacrocorax varius*, Pied Cormorant.—These species were the only Cormorants seen in the district. Not common. *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, Pelican.—These birds gradually increased until finally some 300-400 were on the swamp near Cadell. As the floodwaters in the Murray receded the water on the swamp emptied into the river through a floodgate, and the fish consequently became more concentrated in the swamp—hence the Pelicans. Later the water in the swamp became very low and the fish had either been eaten or had escaped into the river, so the Pelicans left also. *Larus novae-hollandiae*, Silver Gull.—Frequently seen. *Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*, Spur-winged Plover.—Quite common along the edge of the river, and some were on the flats. *Zonifer tricolor*, Banded Plover.—These birds had nested in large numbers, but none was about while I was there. *Charadrius ruficapillus*, Red-capped Dotterel.—A few birds were about. *Charadrius melanops*, Black-fronted Dotterel.—Plentiful, and many were nesting. One nest was found on a stony area not far from the water, but some days later, after the drying-up of floodwaters, it was at least half-a-mile away from water. *Himantopus leucocephalus*, White-headed Stilt.—A few were seen. *Erolia acuminata*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.—About 20 were seen the first day, but none after that; probably they were on migration. *Burhinus magnirostris*, Southern Stone-Plover.—Although I saw none, the birds could be heard every night. Mr. Brockmeyer found several nests earlier in the season. *Platalea flavipes*, Yellow-billed Spoonbill.—A few birds were

occasionally on the flooded areas. *Egretta alba*, White Egret.—Occasionally birds were seen. *Notophox novaehollandiae*, White-faced Heron.—Common. *Notophox pacifica*, White-necked Heron.—Seen on a few occasions. *Nycticorax caldonicus*, Nankeen Night-Heron.—A few birds roosted in trees along the bank of the river during the daytime. *Chenonetta jubata*, Maned Goose.—A few of these birds were identified. *Anas superciliosa*, Black Duck.—Common. Many ducklings were seen. *Querquedula castanea*, Chestnut Teal.—A few pairs were seen. *Querquedula gibberifrons*, Grey Teal.—Common. Many ducklings were seen. *Haliastur sphenurus*, Whistling Eagle.—These birds were common, and their whistling could be heard all day long. One afternoon, whilst fishing, we saw some very pretty flying when three Whistling Eagles had a mock battle. There was quite a strong wind blowing, and the birds were circling around above the river. One would suddenly rise, using the lift of the wind, and after flying to a considerable height would swoop down into the wind upon one of the others. The attacked bird would do nothing until the attacker was nearly upon it, and then in one swift movement would turn over on its back and make a vicious blow with one or both feet. The attacker, of course, did not come within reach of this, and both birds would slip out and soar again—the sham-fight being repeated by two birds some little while later. The birds were whistling during the whole performance. *Falco longipennis*, Little Falcon.—A finely-coloured male was seen feeding upon a Noisy Miner. When he was disturbed he flew away with the Noisy Miner in his talons. *Falco berigora*, Brown Hawk; *Falco cenchroides*, Nankeen Kestrel.—A few of these two species were seen. *Kakatoe galerita*, White Cockatoo.—A few birds were about. *Kakatoe roseicapilla*, Galah.—Very common. *Platycercus flaveolus*, Yellow Rosella.—Common. *Barnardius barnardi*, Ringneck (Mallee) Parrot.—Several were observed. *Psephotus haematonotus*, Red-backed Parrot.—Common. *Psephotus haematogaster*.—Blue Bonnet.—A few pairs were seen. *Melopsittacus undulatus*, Budgerigah.—One small flock was noted. *Podargus strigoides*, Tawny Frogmouth.—A dead body was found. *Dacelo gigas*, Laughing Kookaburra.—Common. *Halcyon sanctus*, Sacred Kingfisher.—Common along the banks of the river, where it could often be seen, and heard, breaking up dragon-flies before swallowing them. *Merops ornatus*, Bee-eater.—Quite a number were in some sandy areas; also capturing dragon-flies. *Hirundo neoxena*, Welcome Swallow.—Common. A nest was found in

a disused tank with no shade. The eggs could have needed no brooding in the daytime. *Hylochelidon aricl*, Fairy Martin.—Nests and birds were common along the cliffs. *Rhipidura flabellifera*, Grey Fantail.—A few seen in the scrub. *Rhipidura leucophrys*, Willie Wagtail.—Common. *Seisura inquieta*, Restless Flycatcher.—A few seen. *Petroica goodenovii*, Red-capped Robin.—Fairly common. *Colluricincla harmonica*,—Grey Shrike-Thrush.—Several seen. *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Magpie-Lark.—Common. *Coracina novae-hollandiae*, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.—A few were seen, always about the same spot. *Lalage tricolor*, White-winged Triller.—Only one bird was seen. *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-browed Babbler.—Common. *Epthianura albifrons*, White-fronted Chat.—Common. *Smicror-nis brevirostris*, Brown Weebill.—A few seen on several occasions. *Aphelocephala leucopsis*, Eastern Whiteface.—Fairly common in the mallee. *Acanthiza uropygiae*, Chestnut-tailed Thornbill.—Quite a number was seen. *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, Yellow-tailed Thornbill.—Common. *Malurus assimilis*, Purple-backed Wren.—Common, especially in the garden at the house. *Artamus cyanopterus*, Dusky Wood-Swallow.—Several seen. *Climacteris picumnus*, Brown Tree-creeper.—Very common. *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*, Mistletoe-Bird.—I did not see any, but Mr. Brockmeyer had observed them earlier in the year. *Pardalotus* sp.—Several were seen at different times, but the species was not identified. *Meliphaga penicillata*, White-plumed Honeyeater.—Very common. *Myzantha melanocephala*, Noisy Miner.—Common. *Myzantha flavigula*, Yellow-throated Miner.—Several seen. *Acanthagenys rufogularis*, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater.—Common. *Entomyzon cyanotis*, Blue-faced Honeyeater; *Philemon citreogularis*, Yellow-throated Friar-Bird.—These two species were occasionally seen. *Anthus australis*, Pipit. *Zonaeginthus guttatus*, Diamond Firetail. *Corvus coronoides*.—Common. Eat many grasshoppers on the flats. The Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) also help in this work. *Corcorax melanorhamphus*, White-winged Chough.—Fairly common. *Cracticus torquatus*, Grey Butcher-Bird.—Some always around the slaughter-shed and the meat-safe. *Gymnorhina tibicen*, Black-backed Magpie; *Gymnorhina hypoleuca*, White-backed Magpie.—Common.