

FURTHER NOTES ON EARLY ORNITHOLOGY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

III.—Notes on Birds in the Journal of Explorations in Central Australia under the leadership of Allen A. Davidson, 1898 to 1900. S.A. Parliamentary Paper No. 27, 1905.

(Abstracted by J. B. Cleland.)

In Davidson's notes on the country explored east of the Overland Telegraph Line, the following references to birds occur:—

On the way up, near Bonney Well, a brace of ducks was bagged (p. 1). Referring to the bird life in the whole district (Barrow Creek to Tennant Creek and laterally on each side), Davidson states (pp. 7-8) that the more numerous birds were galahs, parrots, hawks, crows, minahs, sparrows [i.e. Chestnut-eared Finches] and pigeons, "the dapper little rock pigeon [*Lophophaps plumifera*] . . . being the most interesting. Smaller birds around the rockholes are more numerous, but consist for the most part of sparrows [see above]; ducks and a few water birds are occasionally seen on the large waterholes. I have ridden for days without even seeing a single bird on the wing, or sighting anything living but lizards. Among the larger varieties of animal life are . . . a few emus."

The following references occur in the Journal of the Western Expedition in 1900, when, leaving from Bonney Well, Tanami and the Granites were discovered:—On May 13, eight days after starting, four swallows, some pigeons, and a number of diamond sparrows were seen round water in a claypan. Next day numerous tracks of emus were seen. On May 16, pigeons, eagles, and many small birds were plentiful along a watercourse. On May 22, birds of all descriptions were numerous round a waterhole, some pigeons from a flock being shot for eating. A few emu tracks were seen on May 25, and next day numerous tracks of emus and turkeys [bustards], whilst diamond sparrows [Chestnut-eared Finches] led to their finding a rockhole and crows and hawks hovered round the camp. On May 28, a flock of cockatoo parrots passed over the camp. Numerous turkey and emu tracks were seen on May 29. A flock of diamond sparrows on June 2 led

to their finding a sheet of water 30 yards long and 15 in width on which were nine ducks and a small diver. On June 4, crows, eagles, and small birds were plentiful round a waterhole. Emus were numerous on June 5 and again next day, when several cranes [herons] and ducks, crows, (diamond) sparrows, hawks, etc., were seen round waterholes. On June 10, round a waterhole at the Buchanan Hills, diamond sparrows and small birds were in great numbers. Near Hooker's Creek on June 20 rock pigeons were noticed at a waterhole and throughout a big tableland range. At the same locality on June 23, two ducks were killed for the pot—Davidson regretting the destruction of any of the little life that existed in this country—and small birds, crows, hawks and pigeons were noted in considerable numbers. Some emus were noticed on the tablelands on June 26—the first seen. A valley on July 6 was the home of a great variety of birds, doubtless owing to the limewoods being in blossom and the close proximity of waterholes. Near the Pedestal Hills on July 27 birds were extremely numerous and Davidson says that "coming along early this morning, with splendid grass flats to walk on, flocks of grass parrots and birds of other descriptions chirping and singing, made me for a while imagine I was in a more favored locality than Central Australia." Whilst boiling their quart-pots next evening, flocks of pigeons passed overhead—birds usually seen about after a good season, so Davidson surmised that large waters existed somewhere in the neighborhood. On August 3 a very large number of grey owls [Masked Owl?] were noticed whilst travelling up some gorges. On August 6 small birds were in great numbers and their chirping and singing made pleasant sounds to their ears; turkey [bustard] tracks were numerous and two were seen on the wing. A number of small birds and [diamond] sparrows were round two small gnamma-holes on August 8. On August 15, near Tanami, a turkey [bustard] was seen and fired at. On August 19, near the Granites, a number of sparrows [Chestnut-

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eared Finches] were utilizing water trickling out from a soakage in rocks, and minahs and other small birds were numerous, together with a few pigeons and a fair quantity of crows. On August 24, numerous emu tracks were seen, and crows and small birds, including a large number of diamond sparrows, were noticeable. Still near the Granites "sparrows" and doves were numerous about some conglomerate rocks. On August 29, birds were recorded as numerous, feeding on the thick, sweetish fluid of a new kind of Corkwood [Hakea]. On September 2, it is noted that grey owls [Masked Owl?] inhabit the Granite Hill. On September 6, small birds, chiefly diamond sparrows, were numerous on the flats. On September 8, on the return journey, the twittering of "sparrows" and other birds indicated water somewhere, but they were unable to locate it.