

BIRD CENSUS OF ALAWOONA DISTRICT BY PUPILS OF ALAWOONA SCHOOL, 1942

The work of making a bird census for the school district of Alawoona was part of the nature studies conducted by the children at that school. The work was spread over a period of four years. The work was carefully checked by the teacher, Mr. Lancelot J. Hocking, who is an enthusiastic nature student and has inspired the children under his charge to emulate his example. The following note was forwarded by Mr. Hocking, the Head Teacher, to Dr. C. Fenner, Director of Education, as part of the village survey being conducted by the teacher and the scholars. The children are now busy with a survey of the flora of the school district. This is real nature study as opposed to nature studied through books.

The following brief explanation is by the Head Teacher: "The classification of these birds has been made as a result of four years' study. The township of Alawoona, which is about the centre of the Murray Mallee district, is fortunate in having mallee

surrounding it, with many scrubs surrounding the farms. About seven miles south of the school there is some very old and large-treed mallee scrub. The school itself is surrounded by mallee. Our enrolment has averaged about 40 each year. The birds charted have been classified by direct study, for during our nature study lessons as much time as possible has been spent on excursions and each bird has been definitely studied in its environment. Individual and group studies have also been made during week-ends and holidays by the pupils. For our school records, a copy of each of these has been made in blank exercise books. Each child from Grade 4 upward has an individual bird notebook.

"Caley's 'What Bird Is That?' and Leach's 'Australian Bird Book' have been extensively used as a source of reference. The sketches I have made have been taken from copies."

BIRD NOTES

Mallee Emu Wren.—Nest with eggs, at Peebinga, September 19. (N. McGilp.)

Black-winged Currawongs (*Strepera melanoptera*).—Three seen at Salisbury, September 19. (A. O. Crompton.)

Pelicans.—Eight were seen flying over Glenelg on September 21. (A. G. Edquist.)

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.—At Beaumont on July 18, and West Terrace, Adelaide, on July 25. (J. B. Cleland.)

Welcome Swallows.—Burnside, on July 12, two at Beaumont on July 19, North Adelaide on July 24, and Parkside on August 2.

Ages of Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos.—Mrs. F. W. Eardley's cockatoo has recently died at an estimated age of 60 years, having been received as a young bird out of the nest when a member of the family was under the age of four. The Stonyfell Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was acquired by the Crompton family as a "squeaker" in October, 1876, and died in September, 1936—just under 60 years old. Miss M. M. Beevor's bird is now 52 years old. The last-named has never laid an egg, so may be a male.

Birds at Salisbury.—On October 26 a Whistling Eagle and Horsfield's Bush Lark were noted, and on October 27 about 60 Masked Wood-Swallows were seen. (A. O. Crompton.)

Crested Terns at Glenelg.—Twenty-one noted on November 7. (A. G. Edquist.)

Tree-Swallows nesting in the City of Adelaide.—On November 20, these birds were still nesting under verandahs in Rundle Street East and, at the Railway Station. (C. E. Rix.)

Black-chinned Honeyeater in Adelaide Suburb.—A Black-chinned Honeyeater was feeding on Eucalypt flowers and attending to its offspring at Westbourne Park on November 27. (S. E. Terrill.)

English Starlings eating Olives.—When asked to check up on the report that the introduced Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were eating olives in lieu of their usual food, I made the following observations in June near the Glynde, a north-eastern suburb of Adelaide. Five birds were shot for examination, with the following results:—(1) Five whole ground beetles and parts of many more. (2) Hard mass of fig. (3) Five olive stones still in their skins and one whole ground beetle. (4) A mixture of olives and fig. (5) Three clean olive stones and a mass of skins.

While watching the trees I observed that the majority of olives were swallowed whole but some sucked the fruit dry and then wiped off the remains on a branch. A man who owns a nearby olive plantation stated that starlings had ruined a large part of his crop. This would account for the number of wild olive trees now growing in our foothills. (Oliver Fuller.)

.....Mistletoe Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*).—I have kept these birds off and on for several years, feeding them on banana and on mistletoe berries when ripe. They are quite easy to tame, and make a good show in the aviary. When eating the berries, they pick them off and then juggle them in their beak until they can squeeze the seed out straight on to their beak. The empty skin is wiped off on the branch. The seed passes right through the bird and is ejected on to a branch. The coating of gluey material firmly fastens the seed to the bough, and it begins to grow in about a week. (Oliver Fuller.)

Nankeen Kestrels nesting in the City of Adelaide.—A Nankeen Kestrel's nest was seen on November 2 in a broken ventilator on the south side of Foy & Gibson's. One bird was sitting and the other perched on a ledge outside the ventilator. (Oliver Fuller.) A young Kestrel was picked up in the University grounds in November.

Blackbirds eating Vine Moths.—Blackbirds in November were eating the large Vine Moth Caterpillars at the Glynde. They have been seen in one instance feeding their young with them. (Oliver Fuller.)