

BIRDS ON THE FRINGE OF CATTLE COUNTRY, N.E. SOUTH AUSTRALIA

By J. NEIL McGILP

On Tuesday, May 6, 1947, in company with Mr. Bruce Foulis, since deceased, the writer left Adelaide to make an inspection of and report on some of the outside netting fences which, generally speaking, separate the sheep and the cattle country of South Australia.

It was proposed to use these fences as a buffer vermin proof fence, to be placed under the control of a Board, as a first line of defence against the inroads of dingoes from the cattle country to the north. It was known that the existing fences needed repairs and strengthening before they would be suitable for the proposed scheme and it was essential that a report be made indicating the quantity and estimated cost of material required to place the fences in a good and serviceable condition.

The starting point of the fences inspected was just west of Kychering Siding on the East-West Railway Line; the line runs northerly to a point above Lat. 30 where it turns and in a more or less easterly direction, sometimes above, sometimes below the latitude mentioned, runs to the northern tip of Lake Torrens. Here the fence again turns and runs north-north-easterly to the North-South Railway Line, and from this point, after passing under a bridge, it follows a very erratic east and south-easterly direction to the western shores of Lake Frome, which is followed to its southern extremity.

For the purpose of this article, the portion of the fence between Kychering and Lake Torrens will be referred to as the Western Section, and the Eastern Section will comprise the fence line between Lake Torrens and Lake Frome. A plan showing places mentioned herein is attached.

Practically every type of country to be found in the Far Northern part of South Australia was traversed while making the inspection. Rough stony range, sand hills, open plain, salt and blue bush areas, thick mulga scrub, small tracts of mallee and black oak, large gum creeks, watercourse and flooded land, gibber tableland, saline flats in proximity to the salt lakes, powdery

gypsum impregnated soils and sandy plains were but a few of the many types of land met with on our travel.

It was sometimes necessary to deviate from the line of fence, it being impossible to follow it with the motor cars. One of us had to "foot it" along the fence and pick up the cars where it was possible for them to return to the line. The motors were bogged in mud, stuck in heavy sand, stopped by dense scrub and by high rough hills, with accompanying steep eroded gullies; in fact, the trip was a very exhaustive trial of motor vehicles and occupants.

It was essential to leave the line of fence and travel many miles to obtain food, water and petrol supplies, and after completing the inspection of the Western Section we were called to Adelaide for an interim report and overhaul of motors; these trips, together with the actual inspection of the fence, ran up our mileage so that the distance travelled was 2,752 miles, mostly over unmade or no roads at all.

An account of the trip, and of the birds noted, was given before the S.A. Ornithological Association shortly after the writer's return to Adelaide, but as very little information regarding the birds of the country passed through is available, it is thought worth while to publish our observations.

It can be readily understood that if attention were given to the work deputed to us, the opportunities for bird observing were limited to the birds disturbed from the vicinity of the fence. However, as it was necessary to camp out almost every night, full advantage of this was taken to hunt up the birds around the camps during the evening and early morning.

At the time of inspection, the country

through which the Western Section of the fence runs was in good condition. Most of the swamps and waterholes held water and generally there was a good coating of grass and herbage, though it had dried off. At a few places, notably Roxby Downs and Ingomar Stations, a more recent rain had fallen and the pasture was quite green. Here we saw a fair congregation of birds and a few species not usually seen in these areas. The Eastern Section country generally was very well pastured with grass and herbage, but as rain had not fallen since early December, 1946, the feed was dry, consequently bird life was disappointing.

When at Andamooka word was received that Mrs. G. Greenfield, Senr., a very old and much esteemed resident of the North-West, had passed away. Mr. Foulis had for many years been a neighbor of hers, and it was decided to attend the funeral at Purple Downs. On the way back to the fence we stayed a night with Mr. Dave Greenfield at Roxby Downs homestead, which is built on what was supposed at the time to be above the waters of Chances Swamp. At the time of our visit water to a fair depth surrounded the house, which fortunately was safe on a very small area of higher ground. It was by the aid of a boat and guide wires that we reached our destination. Chances Swamp proved an ideal spot for many water birds when Mr. Greenfield accompanied us to point out some of them that he had mentioned during the previous evening.

Mr. Greenfield informed us that he had, a month or so previously, seen two strange pigeons, quite unlike any he knew in the district. One bird had flushed from a nest of a few sticks on the ground, placed in the open centre of a samphire bush. There were two white eggs about the size of those of the Bronzewing Pigeon. It is recalled that Mr. Walter Cain, of Port Augusta, reported the taking of two eggs from a similar situation on Pernatty Station, which is no great distance from Roxby Downs. Mr. Cain flushed the bird and considered it to be the Partridge Pigeon. The occurrence of this species so far south of its natural habitat was so unexpected that Mr. Greenfield was asked to shoot the next bird he saw for identification, but to the time of writing no specimen has come to hand.

A feature of the trip was the great number of kangaroos disturbed as the motors sped along the fence. At times quite large mobs hopped along ahead of us. They were probably more numerous in the Eastern Section. On a treeless grassy plain on Wooltana, we counted 72 of them on the hop, spread out all over the plain and as far as we could distinguish them. Emus, too, were numerous, but nothing like the number of kangaroos.

The following is the list of birds noted, together with some observation notes:—

Emu (*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*).—Quite numerous throughout both Sections, several mobs of a dozen and over noted. Whilst travelling along the Wooltana Netting Fence a bird was seen sitting on a nest, its neck stretched out flat on the ground. The motor was pulled up and the bird was disturbed. It was a male, the bluish color of the skin showing up well through the feathers of the neck, his coat was somewhat abraded and dishevelled, indicating that he had been sitting for some time. He did not rush at us, as sometimes occurs when a bird is forced from the nest. As the fence was between us, he may have realised that any attack was useless, but he remained about 120 yards away. The nest was oval in shape, one end against the fence and the other almost touching a well-worn pad made by stock and kangaroos. It measured 4 feet 3 inches along the oval; it was made of a few small sticks, dried grasses and vegetation well flattened down; some grass had recently been added to the outer edge. Nine eggs, four being almost fresh, the others within a week or so of hatching. No other birds within sight. A few large cotton bushes on either side of the nest, otherwise open plains country.

Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—A number flushed from along the fence, more numerous where recent rains had fallen on Ingomar and Roxby Downs. Its "church-a-whit" call was often heard by day and night. The only quail observed on the whole trip.

Bronzewing Pigeon (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—Only occasionally noted, usually where there was timber.

Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*).—Plentifully dispersed through country traversed, and flocks of 50 or more birds seen

at some waters. As the birds rose, their wings made quite a loud whistling sound. When alighting either on the ground or on a perch, the birds throw up their tails at so much an angle that they appeared to over-balance. A pair had two well incubated eggs in a nest in a Pin bush (*Acacia*) in a watercourse where we camped on Beetram Downs.

Black-tailed Native Hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*).—A flock of 40/50 birds in vegetation on edge of Chances Swamp, Roxby Downs. No nest was noted. Here it might be mentioned that some writers state that this species places its nest on the ground. The writer has found a fair number of nests and none of them were on the ground but placed in lignum and other bushes, up to 5 feet from the ground or water level, for usually the nest is over water in a swamp in which there is a fair growth of bush or lignum.

Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*).—About 20 birds near water's edge of Chances Swamp; others probably this species were too far off for identification. Two birds watched at Big Bank, Moolawatana, but no nest seen.

Little Pied Cormorant (*Microcarbo melanoleucus*).—At least 20 seen on posts in the water of Chances Swamp; not observed elsewhere. Mr. Greenfield informed us that there were some "all black" shags about the swamp for several weeks, and indicated that they were probably the Little Black Cormorant.

Marsh Tern (*Chlidonias leucopareia*).—A fair number hawking over Chances Swamp, not seen to dive into the water.

Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).—A few on Arcoona Lake and Purple Downs Swamp, 16 counted at Chances Swamp—two feeding with the fowls at homestead.

Spurwing Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*).—Four birds at Chances Swamp, two at Arcoona Lake, and two on Purple Downs Swamp.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—Numerous, sometimes in fair-sized flocks throughout Western Section; none observed in Eastern Section. A pair nearby a flooded canegrass flat on Ingomar had four recently hatched young. The parents flew directly at us, their beaks snapping rapidly as they tried to draw attention from the young birds.

The chicks were caught and examined; they were daintily mottled and as they crouched close to the ground to avoid detection they looked like large, hairy grubs.

Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*).—Identified only at a salt-pan covered with shallow water at Wirrappa, where four birds ran along the water's edge, and at Arcoona Lake, where a party of seven birds were noted on the sandy bank.

Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*).—At almost every water in Western Section, heard calling at night as they flew over our Brumby Creek camp on the Ingomar-Cooper Pedy track. In the Eastern Section a few birds seen at Trinity Pool, Lake Letty Bore, and Big Bank.

Australian Dotterel (*Peltohyas australis*).—Surprisingly few seen. Two pairs on Miller's Creek Station; one pair had a nest within 5 yards of the mail-track. The bird was noticed scratching material over the eggs as the motors approached. The nest was a slight depression in the ground, three eggs, points to the centre of the nest, covered with small clods of sun-baked silt. The bird ran around as the nest was being examined. A party of at least 12 birds, probably more, seen on a grassy flat on Moolawatana and another flock in similar surroundings on Wooltana.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).—At Chances Swamp a party of some 40 birds were flying over a small sandy spit and barking as if they might be nesting, but through glasses there did not appear to be any nests. About 20 birds were wading about in Lake Harry Bore drain.

Avocet (*Recurvirostra novae-hollandiae*).—About 30 birds were wading near the water's edge at Chances Swamp, 12 on a large canegrass claypan on Andamooka, and 4 birds on Big Bank.

Stone Curlew (*Burhinus magnirostris*).—Heard calling at Andamooka and Ingomar, but birds not observed.

Bustard (*Eupodotis australis*).—Appeared only in Western Section, one on Arcoona, three on Andamooka, one on Miller's Creek, two on Beetram Downs, 32 at Brumby Creek in one mob, three on Bulgunnia, and three on Mulgathing Stations. A single bird on Ingomar may have had a nest or young; it appeared to be a female, and she did not fly away, simply walked around as a

short search was made; tracks seemed concentrated around a clump of Flinders grass, but neither young nor nest was found.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*)—This species is recorded on the evidence given by Mr. Greenfield; he described it as "it has a long ladle-shaped bill, yellow-color, wades near water's edge, works its bill from one side to the other in the water."

White-fronted Heron (*Notophox novaehollandiae*).—A few birds at watering places on both Sections.

White-necked Heron (*Notophox pacifica*)—Only one, a beautiful bird, seen perching on a dry branch of a gum at a pool of water at Trinity Well on Mt. Lyndhurst Station. When disturbed it flew some distance up the creek, but quickly returned to the perch. It may have had a mate nesting in one of the many Red Gums in the vicinity.

Wood Duck (*Chenonetta jubata*).—A party identified on Chances Swamp in early morning close to homestead poultry yards.

Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*).—About a dozen were observed on Arcoona Lake, several on Chances and Bullers Swamp on Roxby Downs. It was reported to us that a nest was built on a sandy spit in Chances Swamp, but no cygnets were seen.

Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).—Quite a number seen on lake on Arcoona and on Chances Swamp, where a few were feeding along the poultry yard fence at Roxby Downs.

Grey Teal (*Querquedula gibberifrons*).—Numerous on Chances, Purple Downs, Cane-grass swamp on Andamooka, a few on claypan on Ingomar, and about 20 birds on pool at Trinity Well on Mt. Lyndhurst Station.

Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*).—Fifteen birds identified on Chances Swamp, and a pair with seven young, just able to fly a few yards, on Big Bank, Moolawatana.

White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*).—A party of 10 to 12 on Chances Swamp.

Musk Duck (*Oxyura australis*).—Only two birds, a pair, on Chances Swamp.

Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*).—This beautiful bird was seen on Andamooka (two pairs), Roxby Downs (pair), Purple Downs (pair), Ingomar (two birds), Lake Letty

(pair), Mt. Lyndhurst (pair), Moolawatana (pair), Wooltana (four single birds).

Australian Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*).—Quite a number throughout the trip, rarely away from timbered localities. They were generally in pairs, which allowed reliable identification.

Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrhocephalus*).—Only identified at a large pool in Trinity Creek, where a pair flew over our lunch camp several times before flying into a gum about 100 yards away and where after lunch a nest in a topmost light branch was found. None of the party was game to climb up to the nest. Several other single birds were noted but not satisfactorily identified.

Wedgetailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*).—Rarely a day passed without several of these majestic birds being observed, though with few exceptions they were in flight; six birds were in the air over a grassy plain on Wooltana. A bird flew from a well-formed nest in a gum tree in the creek which passes under the North-South Railway Line. Field glasses revealed some green twigs on the nest, which was inaccessible so far as our party was concerned.

Little Eagle (*Hieraetus morphnoides*).—Not as numerous as expected; only occasional bird or pair noted generally in proximity of Gum Creeks. One fine bird alighted on a Box-tree close to our Brumby Creek camp and its long feathered "pants" and square-cut tail were easily seen.

Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*).—A pair were attending a nest in a Box-tree in the water of Chances Swamp. Another pair were working on a nest in a Box-tree at Brumby Creek. The nest had been scratched out, but no green leaves had been added. Other birds were occasionally seen, but usually in vicinity of water.

Fork-tailed Kite (*Milvus migrans*).—These almost domestic birds were apparently just coming down from the north, for they were not in great numbers about homesteads as is usually the case. They are often called Garbage or Scavenger Hawks by reason of the fact that they sit about waiting for refuse thrown out from kitchens, slaughterhouses, etc. The birds showed no signs of having paired off for nesting.

Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*).—Identified only once, when a pair flew near the

car and accompanied us to a gum creek on Wooltana, where we camped for the night. Next morning they were observed in some gums, but no nest was found.

Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*).—Only one bird seen on the whole trip; it dived almost under the front of our car after some small birds disturbed from saltbushes, but so far as could be seen no capture was made. As the Black Falcon rose into the air and flew slowly away one wondered how it had such speed in the dive.

Brown Hawk (*Falco berigora*).—Very numerous throughout the country passed through. A pair were feeding young in a nest in a Mulga in a watercourse on Beetram Downs. Another pair were hanging about a nest in a Box-tree near Big Bank; it was not examined by us. Generally, the birds were of a light color; only a few dark ones noted.

Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*).—Well distributed over country, mostly in pairs but no sign of nesting operations. Three birds, two males—the upper surface of the tail greyish—and a female—upper surface of tail brownish—remained about our camp at Brumby Creek whilst we breakfasted.

Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).—Heard at night at several of our camps. Two birds observed closely as they perched in a Box-tree within a few yards of the Roxby Downs homestead verandah. They were remarkably trusting and appeared to be smaller and darker than southern birds. They may have been young birds, though May is very early for them.

Pink Cockatoo (*Kakatoe leadbeateri*).—In fair numbers near waters in Western Section, and a few seen in the hills of Mt. Nor²-West in Eastern Section. Definitely not nesting. These birds rarely associate with Galahs except when watering. Hundreds of Pink Cockatoos and Galahs were doing much damage by stripping leaves and sprigs from gums and mulga trees near the well in a swamp at Mulgathing—pronounced mulgathing. In no instance did we see the Pink and the Bare-eyed Cockatoos together, and neither appeared to encroach upon the other's territory.

Bare-eyed Cockatoo (*Kakatoe sanguinea*).—Not seen on Western Section, or until we approached the hills of Callana towards the

North-South Railway Line; from there onwards they were very numerous, and in large flocks near waters. Not nesting. Often associated with Galahs, but in flight each species keep together as a section of the flight. When feeding the two species become mixed up.

Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*).—Seen commonly throughout trip, sometimes in large flocks in the Eastern Section (see notes on previous Cockatoos). One Galah flew out of a hollow in a Red Gum in Yerilla Creek on Moolawatana—only sign of nesting.

Cockatoo Parrot (*Leptolophus novae-hollandiae*).—Only once noted, a small party of 10 to 12 birds at Brumby Creek camp.

Many-colored Parrot (*Psephotus varius*).—Rarely a day passed without some Mulga Parrots being seen; they were usually in pairs or very small parties, and mostly found in timbered watercourses or scrublands.

Blue-bonnet (*Psephotus haematogaster*).—Rare; two birds in a clump of Mulga on Lake Letty and a single bird calling whilst flying from a needlewood on Wirrealpa Station; not seen on Western Section.

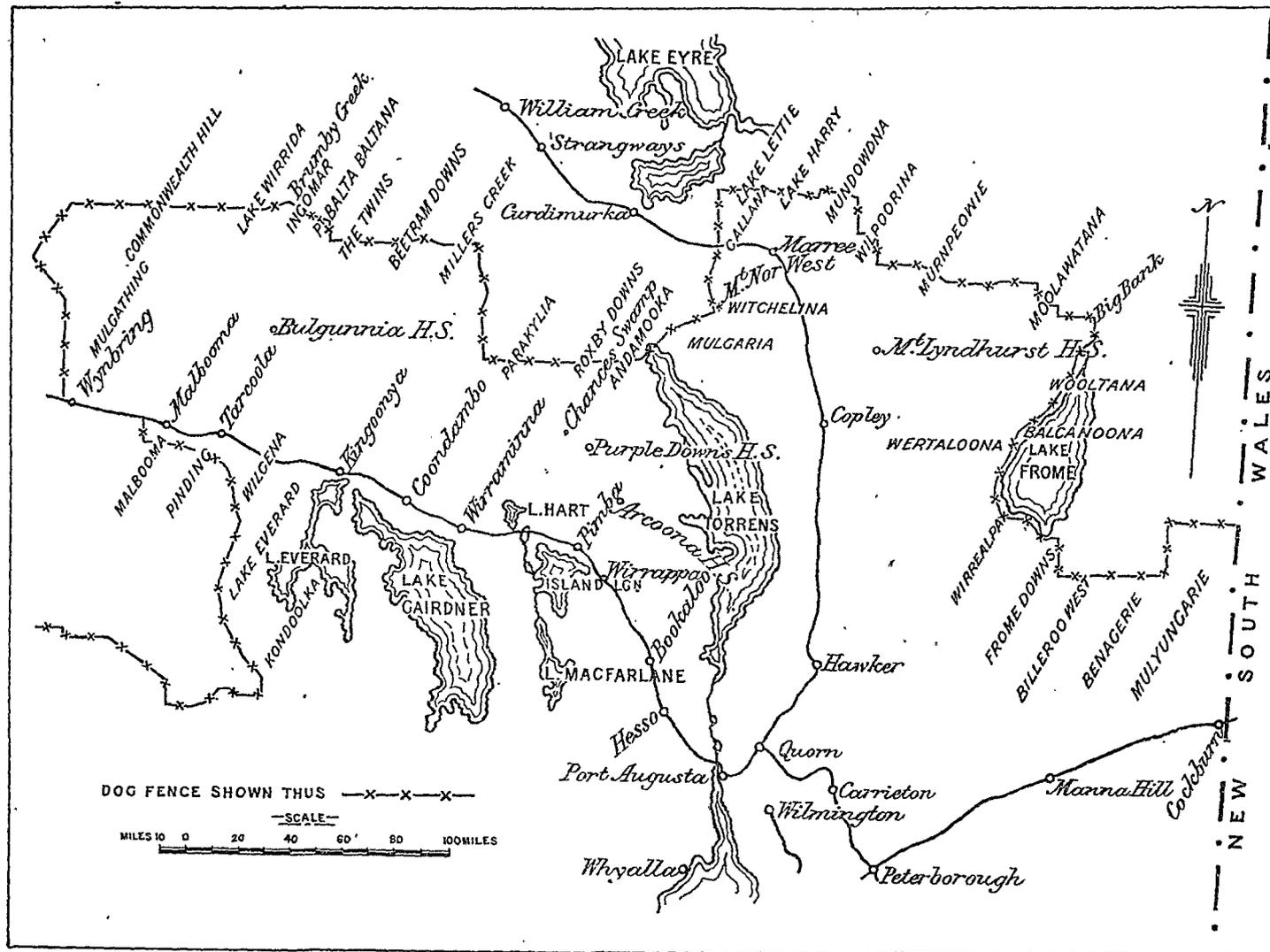
Shell-parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—On Western Section only, numerous and sometimes in very large flocks. At Brumby Creek camp a very large flock tried to alight upon a fairly large dry Mulga; they sat so thickly that the whole tree in the early morning sunlight seemed alive and green, the surplus birds landed on the ground and on small currant bushes near the tree. Young birds were heard calling from hollows on several occasions.

Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*).—One only, perched in customary stick-like manner in a large fork of a teatree at our camp on Wooltana.

Owlet Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristata*), and Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*).—The calls of these two Nightjars were heard as birds flew over the camp-fire at night at Brumby Creek.

Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*).—One bird was sitting on top of a dry Mulga on Beetram Downs, not heard calling.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).—Generally noticed about homesteads and habitations and at most waters. A pair had a nest in a little-used hut on Mt. Nor²-



S.A. Orn., vol. XIX, part 5. McGilp, J. N., ON THE FRINGE OF THE CATTLE COUNTRY. Map (to face page 46) kindly prepared by J. G. Souter.
 Errata: In text for "Kychering" read "Wynbring."

West; four eggs appeared to be well incubated.

White-backed Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosterna*).—Frequently seen when we passed creek banks and washouts. Nesting tunnels examined showed evidence of being prepared for eggs; many had fresh leaves forming a nest at end of tunnel.

Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*).—In most of the many large gum creeks. These birds roost in hollow spouts, several going in about sundown and out in the early morning.

Black and White Fantail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*).—Not numerous, but no doubt many were unobserved as we motored along. At most camping places and near homesteads some birds appeared. A pair were building a nest in a Box-tree at Brumby Creek.

Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*).—Fairly plentiful through areas traversed. A pair were busy building the small nest in a Mulga on Wirrealpa. All the birds observed every now and again opened the wings out from the body, pushing them forward and downward so that the points of the wings almost touched the ground or the perch on which they sat. This charming creature spends a good deal of its time on the ground searching for food. Its most peculiar call, "Tick" followed by slurred running notes like "tarry-eri-eri-eri," was often heard.

Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*).—Invariably the few birds noticed were in timbered creeks or scrubby areas. A pair almost certainly had young or a nest at the corner of the Miller's Creek-Parakylia Fence. A short search gave no results.

Western Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria griseogularis*).—Just as we pitched camp a few miles N.W. of Kychering, the peculiar call of the species was heard. After a few minutes two birds came quite close to the camp; they were apparently unafraid and curious. The call is rather mournful and something like "Chic," "Check," "Chair," was given at the camp, which was made in a fair patch of mallee and black oak scrub. We were surprised to find the species so far north, though it is fairly common in the Eyre Peninsula mallee belt.

Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*).—Noticed a few times about camps on Beetram Downs, Roxby Downs, Brumby

Creek and Mt. Lyndhurst. Occasionally the "e-chung" and whip-crack calls were heard without the birds showing themselves.

Western Shrike Thrush (*Colluricincla rufiventris*).—Only observed at our Brumby Creek and MacDouall Peak camps. Very little difference between these and more southern birds, perhaps more rufous on lower abdomen. The few we saw seemed very shy and seldom called.

Magpie Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*).—Wherever there was water with trees in vicinity these birds could be expected. One pair had a nest in a Box-tree in the water of Chances Swamp. The sitting bird could not be disturbed from the nest, it being too far from the water's edge. The black headed and throated male flew into the nesting tree twice whilst we watched, but he did not feed the sitting bird or go near the nest.

Crested Bellbird (*Oreoica gutturalis*).—Not common anywhere on trip. Showed up at camps on Miller's Creek, Beetram Downs, Brumby Creek, Mt. Nor'-West, and Wootana; its characteristic call has many varied notes, only two of which can be likened to the sound of a bell.

Wedgebill (*Sphenostoma cristatum*).—It was surprising to find this species at Brumby Creek, for so far as we are aware it had not been recorded west of Lake Torrens. Its presence rather indicates that the species may be distributed right across the State into Western Australia somewhat along the 30th Latitude. It is known to occur in S.A. as far down as the southern shore of Lake Torrens but only on the eastern side of the lake. The "Wirrit-te-chip" call was heard as we were unloading our camp equipment and too late to investigate the area. Early next morning two pairs of birds were located and three old nests built in mistletoes in Mulga trees were found. The call was given again and again for fully an hour until one got rather fed up about it. Several other birds in pairs or small parties were seen and heard on the Eastern Section. The Wedgebill as it flies fairly close to the ground is not unlike a Babbler, but its erect crest and striking white tips of the outer tail feathers provide easy identification.

Ground Cuckoo-Shrike (*Pteropodocys maxima*).—Whilst one car was held up through a broken axle in a sandy watercourse on Oakden Hills, seven of these fine birds

flew around for a time, and then four of them settled on a dry Mulga and the others on the ground, thus allowing close observation. The fine cross markings of the breast, rump and tail coverts are very beautiful, this together with the blackish wings and tail, which is forked, form a handsome picture. The call is very hard to describe: it is rather a plaintive whistle, quite unlike the call of the Black-faced bird. Two birds were noted on Arcoona and two others on Andamooka.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*).—Very numerous, particularly on Western Section. A nest apparently ready for eggs found in a Mulga on Mt. Nor'-West was made of small pieces of bark matted together with cobweb, and it was lined with a few pieces of rootlet and grass. Built on a horizontal fork, the nest measured roughly 5 inches external diameter, with the egg cavity $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter and less than 1 inch in depth; both birds seen near nest and one flew into it. The species has a peculiar habit when alighting: it shuffles out the wings and refolds or wraps them against the body.

Cinnamon Quail Thrush (*Cinlosoma cinnameum*).—A few birds flushed as the motors proceeded along the fence, more frequently on the Eastern Section. A pair, on The Twins fence, had two young just able to run quite well; when the chicks were caught the parents became much agitated, coming within a few feet of us. Both ruffled out the body feathers, expanded the tail, and with drooping wings brushing the ground ran in a threatening manner towards us and giving a cluck-like call. They looked very like miniature domestic turkey gobblers. When the chicks were released, they ran off, only at the cluck-call from their parents to drop flat upon the ground amid some scanty grass.

White-browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*).—Not very numerous at any stage of our travels. Two freshly lined nests in Brumby Creek, but this does not indicate that the birds were ready to lay eggs.

White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*)—Seen only on Western Section, at Miller's Creek watercourse, at Brumby Creek, and at Roxby Downs; not numerous anywhere.

Orange Chat (*Epthianura aurifrons*).—

Noted quite frequently on both Sections; a pair with a nest and three just hatched young on Beetram Downs, nest in a salt-bush about 6 inches from ground.

Gibber Bird (*Ashbyia lovensis*).—Not observed on Western Section. First met with on Lake Letty, north of Marree, where a pair acted as if nesting, but nest not found. More plentiful as we travelled eastward.

Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*).—Not plentiful anywhere, but occasionally noted when we camped near Eucalypts. A pair had two young in the very neat domed nest built in a drooping branch of a Box-tree in Brumby Creek. The nest was much decorated with cobweb and spiders' cocoons and lined with pink Galah feathers.

Eastern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*).—Quite a common bird on both Sections. Their call somewhat resembles the jingling of hopple chains when these are rattled. A bird flushed from a hollow fence-post wherein could be seen the nest. We refrained from splitting open the post to see contents.

Red-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*) (*hamiltoni auctt*).—Identified only at Mulgathing and Ingomar camps, in scrubby localities.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*).—Fairly often noted, usually in pairs in mallee and other scrublands. Whilst camped on Mt. Nor'-West a bird was observed carrying nesting material into a knot-hole of a dead Mulga. Both birds carried material and at one time both entered the hollow.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza thrysoirhoa*).—These easily identified birds were fairly common throughout the trip. Some small flocks were feeding upon the ground between cotton bushes near a large claypan of water. No nests were found.

Redthroat (*Pyrholaemus brunneus*).—Identified only at Beetram Downs camp. Attention was called to its presence in a good patch of salt and blue bush by its pretty, sweet song, not unlike many of the notes of *Hylacola*. With field glasses the rusty throat patch showed up plainly. Several small birds, thought to be this species but not satisfactorily identified, flushed out of saltbushes along the fence. Not seen on Eastern Section.

Rusty Field Wren (*Calamanthus isabelli*).

nus).—A Field Wren, thought to be the Rusty, was observed near The Twins boundary, the only one seen on the Western Section. Quite a few were flushed from cotton and blue bush areas in the vicinity of Lakes Callabonna and Frome. None appeared near our camps.

Brown Song Lark (*Cinchorhamphus cruralis*).—When passing through green patches and watercourses from time to time some of these loud-voiced birds rose high into the air, harshly singing as they flew, their feet hanging well below the body. Not noted on Eastern Section.

White-winged Wren (*Malurus cyanotus*).—This gem of the outback was often observed throughout the trip. The blue body feathers varied from a light sky blue to a rich deep blue, sometimes almost black. We consider that "White-winged Wren" should replace "Blue and White Wren" as a more appropriate vernacular name. A beautifully decorated nest was found in a broad-leaved saltbush (old man); it was made of fine grasses and cobweb, ornamented with spiders' cocoons and dry seed pods of the saltbush and lined with soft flower down. It contained three fresh eggs. The male was a very dark blue bird.

Purple-backed Wren (*Malurus assimilis*).—At our camp on Wooltana, Eastern Section, we found our first record of this species. A pair frequented a dense teatree; another party of five birds—one in adult plumage—were located further along the creek whilst a search was being made for a pair of Little Falcons seen the previous night.

Black-faced Wood Swallow (*Artamus melanops*).—The only representative of *Artamidae* seen during our tour of inspection. They were fairly plentiful, generally in flocks of 8 to 10 but sometimes in pairs, over sparsely timbered plains.

Black-capped Sittella (*Neositta pileata*).—Whilst eating breakfast at Mulgathing camp a party of some 20 birds alighted on a nearby dead Mulga. After searching every crevice in the old tree they flew off to the south.

Mistletoe Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*).—Observed only at Brumby Creek, where a male was calling its plaintive note from a dead twig of a large Box-tree in an unsuccessful hunt after his mate. The male rarely left his perch except to feed on mistletoe berries from the tree.

Red-tipped Diamond-bird (*Pardalotus ornatus*).—The "Be-quick" call was heard in almost every gum creek we crossed. Two birds followed a White-plumed Honeyeater out of a tree near one of our camps; they were seen to return and both birds entered a small hollow far up in the gum.

Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*).—A small party in the mallee-black oak scrub near Kychering and in light scrub near the top of Lake Torrens. Attention called to the birds through hearing their rather harsh rattling notes.

White-fronted Honeyeater (*Gliciphila albifrons*).—Numerous on Western Section and up to Mt. Nor'-West; its metallic clanging note, with trill and "ju-ju-ju" calls were heard wherever there was scrub.

Pied Honeyeater (*Certhionyx variegatus*).—A party of seven or eight birds came around our camp at Brumby Creek. A pair on Mt. Nor'-West appeared to be nesting, the male flying well up into the air, giving his weird-like call of "titi-te-te," and somersaulting down over a clump of Dead Finish Acacia, from which the sombre grey colored female was later disturbed. No nest was found.

Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*).—Fairly common throughout our journey. A nest with two fresh eggs, built in a Pinwood in a watercourse near Beetram Downs camp. Another nest with a single egg was found in a teatree under which we camped for a night on Wooltana; the next morning before we left at 9 a.m. the nest held two eggs.

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga ornata*).—Noted only at Roxby Downs, Brumby Creek and near Kychering.

White-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga penicillata*).—A common resident, mostly confined to Eucalypt country, but sometimes in teatree watercourses. They are definitely more yellow than southern birds.

Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*).—Plentiful throughout, nesting at Chances Swamp and Ingomar.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*).—Fairly common, its guttural call heard at almost every camp. A pair had a "ready for eggs" nest in a teatree in creek at Moolawatana.

Pipit (*Anthus australis*).—This ubiquitous bird occurs on open plains and in fair

numbers. Seldom seen in heavy pasture. When passing over the Miller's Creek watercourse, which carried a heavy crop of half-green pasture, a bird flushed near the car; it was thought to be a Mirafr. The car was pulled up, but the bird had by this time settled in the deep herbage and was not again seen.

Chestnut-eared Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*).—Everywhere, sometimes in large flocks, very partial to canegrass swamps. Hundreds of recently used and some nests containing eggs or young. Comparatively fewer on Eastern Section. Probably several thousands in a large flock at a waterhole near Lake Torrens; they lined the hole and covered the many dead-finish bushes nearby.

Raven (*Corvus coronoides*).—Seen throughout the trip, never in a decent-sized flock. Several birds flushed from nests as motors passed. Many nests in isolated Mulga and other trees right out on open plains. Not investigated.

Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*).—Quite

often identified as they sat on fence and the wind blew up the white bases of the feathers. They have a brighter metallic sheen than the Raven. Many feeding on grubs and caterpillars in Miller's Creek watercourse.

White-winged Chough (*Corcorax melanorhampus*).—Four birds flying through mallee and black oak scrub just north of Kychering.

Bell Magpie (*Strepera* sp ?).—Two birds seen flying and calling near Kychering; they were probably the Brown Currawong.

Pied Butcher Bird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*).—It was pleasing to find this bird at our Brumby Creek camp. A pair called on us just after sunrise and called continuously for half an hour.

Grey Butcher Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*).—More often heard than observed, but not numerous.

Black-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*).—Very scarce. Usually in pairs and very shy. Sometimes seen near homesteads.