

## BIRDS OF THE SOUTHERN END OF VICTORIA-SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BORDER

By CLAUDE AUSTIN, Coleraine, Victoria.

Having for some years lived in the south-western corner of Victoria and having travelled extensively and observed birds in this area, I feel that I should make some observations which might be of interest, if read in conjunction with "The Birds of South Australia," by S. E. Terrill and C. E. Rix, as published in this journal of March 1, 1950.

While some of my notes do not refer to records of actual sightings within the State of S.A., they may be of value as a guide to what to expect, as birds have no idea of political boundaries, and if they occur in Victoria can surely be expected to occur in the same habitat, if that exists across the S.A. border.

I have endeavoured to confine my observations to an area bounded by Naracoorte, Mt. Gambier and Port MacDonnell in South Australia and Edenhope, Casterton and Portland in Victoria. In this area no great change of vegetation takes place when one crosses the border in either direction.

I have confined my remarks to 24 species, but there are several others that are "border-line cases."

King Quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis*).—Occurs in some heathy places in the Dismal Swamp area north of Mt. Gambier, and in the summer of 1950 has been observed on several occasions in the Portland district in swampy areas. As a huge area of heath and swamp exists in the South-East, it seems reasonable to expect that it could be fairly widely distributed, though seldom seen.

Little Quail (*Turnix velox*).—Nestled near Casterton in 1949-50 in light bracken in open country, and I have observed it during the last two years near Edenhope in similar country. As the last two years have been excessively dry, this may account for its presence so far south, but similar country and drought conditions exist across the South Australian border.

Grey Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*).—Observed at Glenelg River mouth in the summer of 1949-50, and reported to me as occurring there on other occasions

Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*).—One of these birds was caught in a trap on the lower reaches of the Glenelg River in 1949 and was subsequently handed in to Noel Learmonth, of Portland, for identification. There are huge areas of suitable country for this bird in the lower South-East.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*).—This bird annually visits the Edenhope and Harrow districts in Victoria during the summer, where it feeds on the seeds of the Red Stringy Bark (*Eucalyptus macrorrhyncha*). This summer I saw a mob of over 70 birds, and have had several reports from timber-cutters that they often see Black Cockatoos with red in their tails in similar country along the South Australian border east of Penola. Their quiet habits and their trick of flying through the tops of the trees, as distinct from over them, make this bird difficult to locate.

Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*).—This bird has during the last 15 years extended its range rapidly south, and anywhere in the area under discussion is now quite frequently observed. I recently saw three flocks of 10 or more birds on the road between Penola and Naracoorte, and have several times seen birds near Mt. Gambier.

Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*).—Once observed by the late Eric Simpson near Nelson on the South Australian border.

Rainbow Bird (*Merops ornatus*).—Nests annually near Harrow and Edenhope, and it seems strange that this bird has not been recorded across the border between Naracoorte and Penola.

Spine-tailed Swift (*Hirundapus caudatus*), Fork-tailed Swift (*Micropus pacificus*).—During February of 1942 I was for a short time on the Bombing Range at Lake Bonney in the South-East, and saw large flocks of these birds. They occur annually in the area between Portland and Nelson, and I have no doubt must also occur right along the chain of lakes that runs north to the Coorong. Spine-tailed Swifts are usually in the majority in mixed flocks.

Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*).—This species nests annually in thick teatree gullies that run towards the lower Glenelg River. While I have never actually seen it across the South Australian border, it seems reasonable to expect that it does follow the river into South Australia.

Satin Flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*).—The same remarks apply as to the previous species, though this bird is not as common or as widely-spread.

Eastern Shrike-Tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*).—This species is wide-spread, but not common, throughout all the timbered country in the area under discussion, on both sides of the border.

Little Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina robusta*).—This bird nested near Strathdownie on the border in 1950, and during this summer has been widespread throughout the area under discussion. This is not usually the case, and it may have been driven south to a drier climate with the abnormal seasonal conditions.

Spotted Quail-Thrush (*Cinlosoma punctatum*).—Occurs sparingly but widely throughout all the forest country on the lower reaches of the Glenelg River.

Ground Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*).—More common than the preceding species and less selective in its keenness for thick timber, this bird occurs on both sides of the border at its southern limits.

White-naped Honeyeater (*Melithreptus lunatus*).—This species is widespread and common throughout all the area under discussion, wherever there are trees, though it has a preference for Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*).

Black-chinned Honeyeater (*Melithreptus gilarris*).—This species occurs in small flocks throughout the northern half of the area. I have only seen it frequenting the larger Red Gums (*E. rostrata*).

Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*).—This unobtrusive bird occurs sparingly throughout the whole area, including Mt. Gambier and the lower South-East. It has a preference for the smaller types of timber, and I have not observed it in big Red Gums (*E. rostrata*).

Regent Honeyeater (*Zanthoniza phrygia*).—In September, 1950, in company with C. E. Bryant and other members of R.A.O.U.,

I observed a party of these birds at Apsley, near the South Australian border. I saw others in this district later, and it seems very likely that they also occurred across the border.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Meliphaga chrysops*).—This species is widespread and sometimes common in the lower South-East during summer, and occurs even in the coastal sand dunes. It appears to have a preference for the smaller shrubby Eucalypts.

Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*).—Occurs sparingly in heathlands near the coast from Port MacDonnell to Portland.

Blue-faced Honeyeater (*Entomyzon cyanotis*).—Nests annually near Edenhope and I have observed this bird near Naracoorte. In 1949 it occurred in fairly large numbers at Hynam, and in that spring I saw it as far south as Kaladbro on the border. I have only observed this bird among big Red Gums (*E. rostrata*).

Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*).—This bird, once common throughout the whole of the area, seems to be disappearing from the southern section and is now very seldom seen south of Penola. This also applies to the whole of the south-west district in Victoria.