

MIGRATION OF SOME SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

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The seasonal movements of the migratory species of birds have long attracted the interest of students of bird life in South Australia. Capt. Charles Sturt (*Narrative of Expedition into Central Australia*, p. 40; 1849) observed Budgerygahs and Cockatiels in flocks of 50 to 100 birds migrating southward along the coastline at the head of St. Vincent's Gulf, early in September, 1838. They came from the interior of the country and subsequently dispersed over the southern districts. Sturt (*loc. cit.* p. 63) thought that the movements of these Parrots indicated the existence of favorable country north of the Tropic of Capricorn.

In 1945, Boehm (1) published a simple classification of the bird migrants of the State for the benefit of nature students generally. A scheme was later organised by the South Australian Ornithological Association (3) which involved the monthly recording of the occurrence of a number of selected species by members of the Association in various parts of the State. The results of this survey were very briefly summarised by Terrill and Rix (4). More recently, Glover (2) has dealt with the incidence chiefly of irregular migrants and vagrants in the southern areas of South Australia.

In the preparation of the present paper the writer has considered all the available data on fifteen fairly regular migrants, and has stated his opinions and deductions in the belief that it will be helpful to others, and with the hope that further research may thereby be stimulated.

COCKATIEL

Leptolophus hollandicus

Generally absent from the areas south of Lat. 32 deg. S. during the winter. The southernmost winter location of the species has not been determined. A late record is of 6 seen at O'Halloran Hill, by C. Pearce (*S.A. Orn.*, XIII: 19; 1935) on April 4,

1934. However, W. C. Johnston (*ibid.*, p. 20) records having seen a number of Cockatiels at Wokurna and Riverton, towards the end of July, 1934. Five were seen by me at Sutherlands on August 12, 1946.

SWIFT PARROT

Lathamus discolor

There does not appear to be any definite record of this species in South Australia for the period September 15 to January 15, so probably all the birds migrate to Victoria, and probably even to Tasmania to breed. See my note "Swift Parrot in South Australia" (*Emu*, 52: 211-212; 1952).

BUDGERYGAH

Melopsittacus undulatus

Retreats to the far north interior of the State or to Central and Northern Australia during the winter. Appears in the mid-Northern and Mallee districts early in September as a rule, and disappears again by the end of February. J. T. Gray (*S.A. Orn.*, XII: 1(9); 1933) records the species from Orroroo in July, 1931.

RAINBOW BIRD

Merops ornatus

According to L. R. Reese (*S.A. Orn.*, XI: 229; 1932) Rainbow Birds are always absent during the winter period in the eastern portion of the Lake Eyre Basin. A record of a specimen said by A. M. Lea and J. T. Gray (*Emu*, XXXV: 71; 1935) to have been taken at Ooldea by Capt. S. A. White in the month of May may be an error. The latest seasonal occurrence for a southern locality is of several birds at Sutherlands on March 15, 1947, noted by the present writer (3).

Although Terrill and Rix (1950, p. 80) state that the species arrives in this State in September, this does not appear to be the rule, even in the mid-northern districts. In many years the birds appear along the Murray River, for example, only as late as

the end of October or even early November. Terrill and Rix also state that the species leaves in March for the islands north of Australia. It is certain, however, that all the birds do not leave Australia.

E. A. R. Lord (*Emu*, 47(1): 43; 1947) says that in south-east Queensland, Bee-eaters occur in moderate numbers during the winter months. Eric H. Sedgwick (*ibid.* 46 (5): 355; 1947) observed the species throughout the winter along the rivers of the northern portion of the Northern Territory.

PALLID CUCKOO

Cuculus pallidus

Apparently only a few laggards remain in the southern portions of the State during summer to mid-autumn. Unusual records are of 5 birds at Buckland Park by E. A. Brooks (*S.A. Orn.*, XVII: 55; 1945) on March 5, 1945, and 9 birds at Victor Harbour by the same observer on March 12, 1945.

BLACK-EARED CUCKOO

Owenavis osculans

Appears to retreat northwards during the summer, but C. E. Rix (*S.A. Orn.*, XVI: 67; 1943) reported a number at Wellington on June 6, 1937. Most records in the south are for the later winter and spring period.

HORSFIELD BRONZE-CUCKOO

Chalcites basalıs

Terrill and Rix (1950, p. 81) state that this Cuckoo arrives in July and August, and departs in November or December. However, there are a number of records from southern localities for the months of March, April, May, and June; but these possibly refer to vagrant birds.

CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO

Scythrops novae-hollandiae

Seems to be absent from the eastern portion of the Lake Eyre Basin in this State during the winter months. A late record is from the Diamantina River, by L. R. Reese (*S.A. Orn.*, XIII: 15; 1934) during May, 1934.

WELCOME SWALLOW

Hirundo neoxena

Dr. A. M. Morgan (*S.A. Orn.*, II(5): 119; 1916) expressed the opinion that this Swallow is less numerous about Adelaide in winter. As a general rule, however, there does not appear to be any reduction in the population of the birds in southern areas, excepting possibly in a very local sense. Even in the

South-East of the State, and on Kangaroo Island, this applies. On June 14, 1948, A. F. C. Lashmar (3) saw 30-40 birds hawking for insects about a flock of sheep at Antechamber Bay, K.I.

There are no parallel cases in South Australia of semi-hibernation of Welcome Swallows in hollow trees and crevices among rocks, such as were reported from Tasmania by H. Stuart Dove (*Emu*, 23: 149; 1923).

TREE-MARTIN

Hylochelidon nigricans

In reduced numbers in Central and Southern districts during late autumn and early winter, as a rule. A few large flocks are seen, but mostly only pairs, and sparse scattered groups occur.

FAIRY MARTIN

Hylochelidon ariel

Terrill and Rix (4, p. 81) state that this species departs from the southern districts in December or January. In 1949, A. R. Attiwell (3) saw several at Naracoorte during February, and H. E. A. Jarman (3) recorded 8 at Tilley's Hill, Brown Hill Creek, on February 20.

At Wilmington, T. Brandon (*S.A. Orn.*, 20: 22; 1951) saw about 100 on March 3, 1950.

FLAME ROBIN

Petroica phoenicea

A. G. Campbell (*Emu*, VIII: 129; 1909) once wrote that "as [Flame] Robins are to be found in numbers wintering in the vicinity of Adelaide, South Australia, I would here suggest by analogy [with their habits in Victoria and Tasmania] that in the forest retreats of adjacent highlands like Mt. Lofty the species will be found in summer nesting."

However, Flame Robins can now be regarded without doubt as simply migrants here. J. W. Mellor (*S.A. Orn.*, VI: 161; 1922) expressed the opinion that the birds seen on the Adelaide Plains during winter are identical with Tasmanian specimens and that they migrate to the 'island State' to breed.

The earliest seasonal occurrence known was at Red Creek on February 28, 1940, when two birds were recorded by C. E. Rix (*S.A. Orn.*, XVI: 69; 1943). A very late record is of two at Naracoorte on September 3, 1947, by A. R. Attiwill (3).

An unusual locality record of a pair at Waikerie, Murray R., by M. J. Walter (3) on Aug. 5, 1946, is unsupported by confirmatory evidence.

WHITE-WINGED TRILLER

Lalage sueurii

H. J. Morton (3) reported "odd pairs" during the winter months at Jervis, in 1946, and J. N. McGilp (loc. cit.) saw 7 at Mindarie in March, 1947.

BROWN SONGLARK

Cinclorhamphus cruralis

Some individuals remain in southern districts during autumn and early winter. In 1946, H. J. Morton (3) observed many at Jervis during the winter period and found a nest containing 2 heavily-incubated eggs on July 23.

RUFIOUS SONGLARK

Cinclorhamphus mathewsi

Apparently migrates northwards during December and January, and returns to the Central and Southern districts of the State towards the end of winter in suitable seasons. The writer (3) saw a pair west of Bower, on June 25, 1947, and July 20, 1947.

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE

Oriolus sagittatus

Apart from a questionable record of two birds seen many years previously by C. E. Rix (Ref. 4, p. 98) at Renmark, during November, there is not any record of this species in South Australia during the spring. Probably all our birds migrated to Victoria to breed.

REFERENCES

- (1) Boehm, E. F., 1945, Bird Migration in South Australia. *S.A. Naturalist*, 23 (2): 2-3.
- (2) Glover, Brian, 1952. Movements of Birds in South Australia. *S.A. Orn.*, XX (8): 82-91.
- (3) South Australian Ornithological Association. Unpublished Data from Monthly Report Sheets, July, 1946—December, 1949.
- (4) Terrill, S.E., and Rix, C. E., 1950. The Birds of South Australia: Their Distribution and Habitat. *S.A. Orn.*, XIX (6-8): 53-100.