

SOME BIRDS OF THE BURRA CREEK

By R. SCHODDE.

During an Easter camp in the Sutherlands area, a visit was made on April 9, 1955, to Burra Creek in the vicinity of Florieton, approximately 18 miles north of the Bower-Mt. Mary road, in company with Mr. E. F. Boehm and Mr. and Mrs. Brian Glover.

The Burra Creek rises on the eastern scarp of the Mt. Lofty ranges near Burra and follows a well-marked channel, lined with Red

Gum (*E. camaldulensis*) to the Gums Station, Florieton. There the channel opens into a chenopodaceous flat, dominated by Peppermint Gum (*E. calcicultrix*). With the flat broadening, several miles east, the Peppermint is replaced by a lush shrub steppe vegetation. This continues to near Morgan, where once again the creek is a cut channel, and at its confluence with the Murray it is

lined with Red Gum and Box (*E. largiflorens*). At the time of the visit, the creek bed was dry.

At Florieton, a dry shrub steppe is found away from the creek dominated by societies of Blackbush (*Kochia pyramidata*) and Saltbush (*Atriplex vesicarium*). Trees or tall shrubs, represented by False Sandalwood (*Myoporum platycarpum*), and *Acacia oswaldii*, are widely scattered or absent. Outlier pockets of Red Mallee (*E. oleosa*) also are found. About 8 miles south, the shrub steppe merges into dry Mallee and Black-oak (*Casuarina cristata*) belts.

As the area is little known ornithologically, I feel it is necessary to publish our observations.

In 1929, E. F. Boehm (1) visited the district, but his only record of note was the Little Thornbill (*Acanthiza nana*) on the creek.

Species recorded were:—

Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*):—Several seen on the Peppermint flood plain.

Brown Hawk (*Falco berigora*):—A single bird over dry shrub steppe at Florieton.

Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*):—Several observed both in Peppermint and Red Gum belts.

Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adelaidae*):—In the tall Red Gums of the creek bed, 4 birds were observed, and one adult male collected. In coloration they appeared no different from the typical *P. adelaidae*. Florieton, I believe, is the eastern limit of this species on the Burra Creek.

Condon (2) has stated that the birds of the Burra Creek may link the Yellow Rosella (*P. flaveolus*) with *P. adelaidae*. However, portion of the environment as shown in the rough vegetational survey, between Florieton and Morgan, could form a barrier in keeping separate the two populations. Merging does, however, occur along the Marne River, 50 miles south.

Ringneck (*Barnardius barnardi*):—A few on the Peppermint flood plain.

Red-rumped Parrot (*Psephotus haematotus*):—In the gums of the creek channel.

Mulga Parrot (*Psephotus varius*):—A few in the channel Red Gums.

Blue Bonnet (*Psephotus haematogaster*):—On

the Peppermint flood plain, a single bird was observed.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*):—One flying near the Gums homestead.

Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*):—Two pairs observed: one in the Peppermint Gum area, the other in the Red Gum channel.

Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*):—Two birds in the channel Red Gums.

Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*):—Observed in small numbers in the wooded areas of the Burra Creek.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*):—Seen in the Red Gums.

White-browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*):—A small party observed on the borders of the Red Gums.

White-fronted Chat (*Ephianura albifrons*):—A few observed both in the dry shrub steppe and the lush grassland of the flood plain.

Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*):—Observed in Blackbush bordering the creek channel.

Chestnut-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*):—A small flock in Bullock-bush (*Heterodendron oleifolium*) in the Peppermint zone.

Redthroat (*Pyrrholaemus brunneus*):—A single male observed singing in a Bullock bush in the Peppermint area.

Rufous Field-Wren (*Calamanthus campestris*):—Two birds were seen and another heard in Bladder Saltbush lands. A specimen, adult female, was collected for the S.A. Museum and seemed to show less rufous on the crown and rump than birds of the race *suttoni* which occurs in an analogous environment at Port Augusta.

White-winged Wren (*Malurus leuconotus*):—A party observed in the shrub steppe of the flood plain.

Purple-backed Wren (*Malurus assimilis*):—Parties observed on the borders of the timber along the creek bed.

Black-faced Woodswallow (*Artamus melanops*):—A pair seen on the shrub steppe of the creek flat.

Dusky Woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*):—Observed in the Red Gums along the creek.

Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*):—Several noted in the Red Gum belt.

Mistletoe Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*):—

A pair observed in the Peppermint flat.

Red-tipped Pardalote (*Pardalotus ornatus*):

—Several on the Peppermint plain.

Silver-eye (*Zosterops lateralis*):—A single

bird accompanied the Chestnut-tailed

Thornbill flock in the Peppermint zone.

White-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga peni-*

cillata):—Frequently seen in the chan-

nel gums.

Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*):

—Observed often throughout the wooded

country along the creek.

Red Wattle-bird (*Anthochaera carunculata*):

—Several in the Red Gums along the

creek bed.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys*

rufogularis):—Observed in the timbered

channel border.

Pipit (*Anthus australis*):—Noted in both the

dry shrub steppe and the steppe of the

creek flat.

Zebra Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*):—A

pair observed in the flood plain steppe.

Raven (*Corvus coronoides*):—Numerous on

the creek flats: over 100 were observed

in the Peppermint area.

Chough (*Corcorax melanorhamphus*):—Small

flocks in the creek woodlands.

Grey Butcher-bird (*Cracticus torquatus*):—

Observed on the Peppermint flood plain.

White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleu-*

ca):—Numerous throughout the creek

timber. This was the only *Gymnorhina*

species recorded along and adjacent to

the creek.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*):—Seve-

ral about a deserted hut along the chan-

nel and a single bird was observed on

dry shrub steppe.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*):—A few noted

in the Peppermint zone.

References cited:—

(1) Boehm, E. F.; S.A.O., vol. X, pt. 2,
p. 71; 1929.

(2) Condon, H. T.; S.A.O., vol. XXI,
pt. 2, p. 22; 1954.

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Some interesting observations were also
made in the Sutherlands and Sandleton areas
on the same camp.

They were:—

Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirroceph-*

alus):—Observed flying along a mallee
road border at Sutherlands.

Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adelaidae*):—

Two juveniles seen in open dry mallee
scrub, dominated by *Eucalyptus gracius*,
5 miles north of Annadale.

Blue Bonnet (*Psephotus haematogaster*):—

Two parties—a pair and a group of
three—observed on the borders of Black-
oak (*Casuarina cristata*) scrubs, 10 miles
north of Mt. Mary. A pair were also
noted in an *Acacia colletioides* flat at
Sandleton.

Bluewing Parrot (*Neophema chrysostoma*):

—A single adult male observed on a
shrub steppe flat at Mt. Mary. Earlier,
E. F. Boehm observed 4 Elegant Parrots
(*Neophema elegans*) at Sutherlands, on
the same week-end. As E. F. Boehm
informed me—though these species may
be numerous on the Mt. Mary plains in
spring months, they are rare at this
time.

Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*)?:

—What was thought to be the call of
this species was heard at Sandleton.
Phonetically, the pleasant, whistling notes
sounded like—"caw - caw - caw gobble-
gobble - gobble . . . etc."—rather reminis-
cent of a plucked violin. This is how
the call of this species has generally
been described.

Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*):—A

single male was observed in dry, open
mallee at Sutherlands, dominated by
Eucalyptus brachycalyx. It is an in-
frequent vagrant in the area.

Ground Cuckoo-Shrike (*Pteropodocys maxi-*

ma):—Five birds seen on a dry mallee
border at Sutherlands adjacent to open
fields. Though non-undulating, the flight
is cuckoo-shrike like. A white rump is
a diagnostic feature of this species.

Redthroat (*Pyrholaemus brunneus*):—Fre-

quently observed in Black-oak scrubs
about Mt. Mary. On the move, the
species runs, but, feeding on the ground,
it hops. The feeding is done under the
cover of bushes.

Black-backed Wren (*Malurus melanotus*):—

At Sandleton, a party was observed in a
sheep-bush (*Geijera linearifolia*) area.
This species is distinguished from the
Purple-backed Wren—the other *Malurus*
of the mallee scrubs—by its much shorter
tail.

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Yellow-fronted Honeyeater (*Meliphaga plumula*):—A numerous species in mallee shoot and mallee-sheepbush associations in the Sutherlands area. The other yellow-plumed *Meliphaga* of the district—the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (*ornata*)—has a more striated breast, lacks the bright yellow-green head and rump of *M. plumula*, and prefers a tall mallee habitat, with little understorey.

Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*)s—A single bird, identified by call and size, was observed in a thick mallee-sheepbush-False Sandalwood (*Myoporum platycarpum*) association near Bower.