

# MOVEMENTS OF BIRDS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## Part II

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During the year 1951 and 1952 large numbers of birds usually considered inhabitants of the interior and northern portions of Australia were observed in the southern parts of the continent. The reason for this influx was, no doubt, a severe drought following several consecutive very good seasons in the "interior."

In a previous paper (I), I discussed this "avian invasion," and gave an account of the various species which had visited southern South Australia up to July, 1952. In this paper I give additional records and describe the status of the principal species up to the present time (July, 1955).

The response to a request in my earlier paper, and in the following issue of this journal for more information on these bird movements, and for additional reports until bird populations returned to normal was most disappointing. By the term "normal" in relation to bird population I imply conditions which I believe existed prior to the 1951-52 influx. Unless otherwise stated, records are by the writer.

A.—Birds which appeared in large numbers over a wide area.

### NATIVE HEN (*Tribonyx ventralis*)

This species appeared in large numbers in northern Eyre Peninsula, throughout the flat country between Port Augusta and Adelaide, throughout the southern Mount Lofty Ranges and the Lower Murray-Lakes area, and in smaller numbers in the South-East of S.A., South-Western Victoria, and elsewhere. Additional records are of a flock of about 12 at Tucker's Lake (Strathalbyn) on August 2, 1952 (B.G.), and October 11, 1952 (R. Schodde)—this may not be abnormal—and one near Two Wells, August 17, 1952.

By the end of 1952 the population of this bird had apparently returned to normal and has remained so since then. Odd records, such as a pair noted occasionally along the River Torrens outlet channel in August and December, 1954, are probably not abnormal.

ERRATA.—In page 83, column 1, line 24 of my previous paper, the date of John Cala-

by's record from the Broughton River is June 22, 1951, not 1952.

### WHITE-NECKED HERON

(*Notophoxyx pacifica*)

The influx of this species was very widespread; reports indicate that the birds were in numbers in Lower Eyre Peninsula, throughout the Adelaide Plains and Mount Lofty Ranges, along the Murray River, throughout the South-East of S.A. and South-Western Victoria, and probably throughout the Murray Mallee with smaller numbers in various other localities.

This species had apparently returned to normal by autumn 1952. There was possibly a minor influx in spring 1952; four single birds were seen between Virginia and Two Wells on August 17 (B.G.), two at West Beach Airport in early September (R. Schodde), and two at Buckland Park, September 21 (R. Schodde). One was seen one mile east of Strathalbyn by D. L. Serventy *et al* on July 27, 1952.

One was seen near Native Valley in October, 1953 (R. Schodde).

In 1954 odd birds were seen by several observers—one between Woodside and Nairne on several occasions between April and July (B.G.), one at Aldgate, July 27 (J. A. R. Miles), and one near Mount Bold in June (G. R. Beruldsen). [See also *S.A.O.*, Vol. 21, p. 55—here G. Ragless' record, "Marion—numerous, April 1954" refers to the White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*).]

### BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*)

This species appeared in very large numbers throughout the area south of a line drawn between Port Augusta and Broken Hill (with the possible exception of the South-East, where only small numbers were reported). The birds were observed breeding in some areas. When my earlier paper was written (July, 1952), numbers had shown no tendency to diminish.

Additional records are as follows:—Twelve at Murray Bridge, April, 1952 (R. Schodde), two at Tucker's Lake (Strathalbyn), August 2, 1952, and six (a party of three, and three

single birds) between Virginia, Two Wells and Buckland Park on August 17, 1952.

The following observations were made by Dr. D. L. Serventy and Messrs. J. H. Calaby and D. L. McIntosh during a motor journey through South Australia in July, 1952:—

- July 26: c. 30 Black Kites 2 miles east of Pinnaroo, c. 6 birds 5 miles east of Parilla, 25 at Lameroo, and c. 500 one mile west of Lameroo, around a pig farm. "The Kites were perched on fences, on the ground, on trees, and many were flying around. An amazing sight."
- July 27: 6, 12 and 1 birds, 4, 2 and 1 miles respectively east of Tailem Bend, 150 at Tailem Bend, and one bird 5 miles west of Wellington.
- July 29: c. 100 Black Kites at Undaba. (Undalya?—B,G.)
- July 30: Three miles north of Port Pirie—a slaughterhouse, but no Kites, but two seen sitting in a tree near a slaughterhouse four miles north of Port Pirie, 10 birds one mile south of Port Germein, and one bird three miles south of Port Augusta. A slaughterhouse but no Kites 26 miles west of Port Augusta. "No observations of species pertinent to this enquiry were made westwards in South Australia. We enquired of the storekeeper at Coorabie, but apparently no Black Kites had appeared in that area."

In the Pinnaroo area, Black Kites were very common in early September, 1952, but were all gone by mid-September (Roy Ribbons—per J. Neil McGilp), and in the Tailem Bend area there were 100 to 200 birds early in September but these had all departed by early October (L. J. Ellis). There are no records of large numbers of these birds in Southern South Australia since September, 1952.

That a few birds have remained is indicated by the following recordings beyond the normal range of the species:—Mannum, one on April 15, 1953; Hattah Lakes (N.W. Victoria), 1 or 2 in January, 1954; Noarlunga, one on July 22, 1954 (A. V. Whiley), between Mannum and Murray Bridge, one on August 11, 1954 (A. V. Whiley); Annadale, one on November 14, 1954; Coolwa, one on November 10, 1954 (A. V. Whiley), and Tailem Bend, two on December 26, 1954. (See also *S.A.O.*, Vol. 21, pp. 55, 62.)

## BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE

(*Elanus notatus*)

A considerable influx of this species took place throughout the flat country from south of Port Augusta to Adelaide and the southern Mount Lofty Ranges, along the Murray, and probably throughout the Murray Mallee and the South-East.

Unlike the other species involved in the 1951-52 influx, the Black-shouldered Kite has remained numerous. Present numbers, although not as great as during the height of the influx, seem to be considerably in excess of the pre-1951 normal.

B.—Birds which appeared in smaller numbers or over restricted area.

## BLACK CORMORANT

(*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

This species was present in unusually large numbers on metropolitan reservoirs and other places near Adelaide. There was also a considerable increase in numbers along the lower Murray River (L. J. Ellis). R. Schodde saw two flocks, of 40 and 80 birds, at Woods Point in March, 1952, this number being greatly in excess of the normal population in this area.

During September, 1952, the following records were made by R. Schodde: 20 near Hallett's Cove, 16 over Payneham, and a few at Buckland Park Lake. None were seen by Schodde at Buckland Park Lake in November.

On metropolitan reservoirs, a flock of c. 100 has remained. Although its headquarters are at Millbrook, what is presumably the same flock is occasionally reported from other reservoirs, and odd birds are usually to be seen on all reservoirs. (Previous to 1951-52 a flock of about 50 was often to be seen at Millbrook.) Elsewhere this species appears to have returned to normal.

## DARTER (*Anhinga novae-hollandiae*)

Unusual numbers were seen on the Adelaide Plains and on metropolitan reservoirs (where this species does not normally occur), and along the Murray River (where this species is normally in very small numbers). As stated in my previous paper numbers along the lower Murray lessened from March, 1952, but odd birds were still present in July, 1952. About 12 were seen at Woods Point in March, 1952, by R. Schodde, who also saw six circling over Unley High School in July, 1952.

Latest 1952 records from metropolitan reservoirs were from Happy Valley (6 on September 3—A. V. Whiley; 1 on September 6—R. Schodde), and Mount Bold (1 on September 17—A. V. Whiley).

On March 3, 1953, 2 or 3 birds flying high over Millbrook Reservoir were almost certainly Darters.

In April, 1954, odd birds again appeared—a single bird on Thorndon Park Reservoir on April 27, and one, sometimes two, on Hope Valley Reservoir from April 27 to October 13. Three pairs were reported from Warren Reservoir on April 19 (Miss O. Waite). A single bird was seen at Mannum on June 30, and numbers seen in the Moorook area in October, 1954, seemed much greater than normal.

#### SPOTTED HARRIER (*Circus assimilis*)

Scattered records from throughout the southern part of the State indicated a small but definite influx of this species. Additional records are of one bird at Buckland Park on August 17, 1952 (B.G.), late September, 1952 (R. Schodde), and January 26, 1953.

My only recent record, one near Paringa on November 3, 1954, is well within the normal range of this species.

ERRATA: On page 89, column 1, of my previous paper, insert lines 50 and 51 between lines 45 and 46.

#### BLACK FALCON (*Falco subniger*)

Scattered records from throughout the southern parts of the State indicated a small but definite influx of this species. Recent records by R. Schodde and the writer, e.g. one at Burnsfield on September 5, 1953, and two near Tailem Bend on December 26, 1954, are probably not abnormal.

#### LITTLE CORELLA (*Kakatoe sanguinea*)

As stated in my previous paper, large numbers were recorded at Red Hill in March, 1952, by R. W. McKecknie and a pair at Langhorne Creek in October, 1951, by H. J. Morton. Additional records are of 3 at Annadale on September 13, 1952, and c. 12 the following day at Mannum. (R. Schodde.)

The following species in this section had apparently returned to normal by the time my previous paper was written:—

Bustard (*Eupodotis australis*)

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

White Egret (*Egretta alba*)

Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*)

Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*)

Cockatiel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*)

Masked and White-browed Wood Swallows  
(*Artamus melanops* and *A. superciliosus*)

Black Honeyeater (*Myzomela nigra*)

White-fronted Honeyeater (*Gliciphila albifrons*)

#### C.—Odd records of other interior birds.

The species dealt with under this heading were:—

Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

Plumed Egret (*Egretta intermedia*)

Pied Goose (*Anseranas semipalmata*)

Whistling Tree-duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*)

Letter-winged Kite (*Elanus scriptus*)

Grey Falcon (*Falco hypoleucus*)

#### Additional information is available on:—

PLUMED EGRET.—Some of the records reported under this species were actually Little Egrets (*E. garzetta*). H. E. A. Jarman's record of two small Egrets at Outer Harbour on March 26, 1952, were stated by him to be definitely *E. garzetta* not *E. intermedia* as stated by me.

LETTER-WINGED KITE.—A single bird was seen by D. L. Serventy *et al* 5 miles west of Wellington on July 27, 1952. "We had a clear view of the under-wing pattern as it flew over the road."

#### D.—Species which may have been involved in the influx.

Those listed were:—

Little Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

Pied Cormorant (*P. varius*)

Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*)

Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*)

Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*)

White-eyed Duck (*Aythya australis*)

Blue-billed Duck (*Oxyura australis*)

From this list the Pied Cormorant should be removed; any apparent increase in numbers was probably coincidental. Also it is my opinion that a definite and considerable influx occurred of the three species of duck listed above, in particular the Grey Teal and White-eyed Duck.

REFERENCES: (1) Glover, Brian: "Movements of Birds in South Australia." *S.A. Ornith.*, vol. 20, pp. 82-91, 1952.