

## BIRDS OF FLINDERS CHASE, KANGAROO ISLAND

By A. JEFFERY

The author was a member of a hiking party which travelled from north to south through Flinders Chase in early spring, 1955. The hike itinerary and a general description of country passed through is as follows:—

1.—From Harvey's Return, a cave in the cliff-like north coast, several miles east of Cape Borda, to the Cape. The route was along the main road, through open mallee country, some of which grew on ironstone country, whereas some grew on sandy ground.

2.—From Cape Borda to Ravine des Casoars, camping near the mouth. Travelled around the deeply-dissected cliff-tops, with stunted mallee growing in depressions and smaller bushes and grass tufts on the exposed ridges. Weather very rough and wet, limiting bird observation.

3.—Hiking in the vicinity of the Ravine mouth and up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles upstream. Deep gorge clothed with teatree at the lower end, then Sugar-Gum flats, and finally thick prickly Acacia and bracken further upstream. The plateau country on each side of the gorge is clothed with thick mallee and brush, as well as taller eucalypts and a variety of trees and bushes.

4.—Along the "West Bay Track," between the Ravine and West Bay. The road runs over plateau country covered with low mallee and brush and dissected by shallow basins and gullies containing small creeks. Thus swampy conditions were common. West Bay is dominated by sandhills rather than steep cliffs, although it is flanked on either side by rocky headlands. It is the mouth of two creeks, which join about a mile inland. These creeks are flanked by teatree and gum-

tree woodland as one proceeds back from West Bay.

5.—(a) Around the cliff-tops to the mouth of Breakneck River. Cliff-top country similar to that further north (2), but less densely covered and merely undulating, not deeply dissected by watercourses.

(b) Up the Breakneck River to West Bay track. The gorge of this river is similar to the Ravine des Casoars, but not so densely clothed inland. Route almost entirely through gum-tree woodland and tall mallee. The mouth is a sandy estuary, flanked by reeds and teatree. High sandhills cover the southern headland.

(c) Along the "West Bay Track" from Breakneck Gorge to Rocky River homestead. Between the gorge and the Rocky River bridge the track passes through mostly medium high mallee with brush. The country is gently undulating, the road being crossed by many watercourses. Several large, gum-lined creeks were also crossed, including the double gorge of Sandy River. Between Rocky River bridge and the homestead the road passes through tall Eucalypt timberland, with dense brush in places.

6.—To the mouth of Rocky River and back to the homestead. Followed "West Bay track" nearly back to Sandy River, then turned south through mallee country, past Snake Lagoon to the mouth. The River runs through a shallow rocky gorge at this point and plunges over ravines and waterfalls onto a sandy beach between rocks at the mouth. The gorge is clothed on each side by mallee stunted. Snake Lagoon is usually a dry bed or perhaps swampy, but after the heavy rains it was actually a small lake, containing a record volume of water.

7.—From Rocky River homestead to the Government Apiary and Koala farm. Returned over same route. Same country as described in last portion of 5(c). Apiary is surrounded by high sandhills.

8.—To Cape de Coudie and return. Route changes from thick mallee and brush with tall eucalypts (near the homestead) to dense medium height mallee on limestone country with sandhills (Bunker Hill and Yacca Flat area) to stunted mallee and low bushes and tussocks (near the Cape).

9.—From Rocky River Homestead to Kelly Hill Caves. Route passed through mallee country, for the most part cleared for soldier settlement. Several patches of large Eucalypts occur along the route (e.g. "Sunshine Avenue"), and South West River, a large gum-lined creek, is crossed. Kelly Hill itself is covered with thick mallee and yacca, standing about 6 feet high. A gum-lined creek also runs past the site.

Where references to places, other than in the Chase or Kelly Hill, occur, the records were made during motor trip across the Island to the Chase area.

Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*).—One introduced bird, Rocky River.

Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*).—Numerous at Harvey's Return, Ravine des Casoars, Breakneck River and Rocky River mouth. Nesting at all localities.

Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—About 5 birds flushed near Rocky River. Distinct black striations on lighter breast. Whirring wings when in flight.

Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—Birds of this species positively identified at Sandy River, South-West River and Kelly Hill.

Brush Bronzewing (*P. elegans*).—One bird distinguished at Kelly Hill. Upper more chestnut than *P. chalcoptera*. Throat, crown chestnut brown.

Black-Throated Grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis*).—On lagoons near MacGillivray and Kingscote.

Australian Gannet (*Sula serrator*).—Observed in sunny conditions off Rocky River mouth. White, wing edgings black, pale rusty coloured behind head and neck. Single bird only.

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*).—Ravine des Casoars (mouth), West Bay, Cape de Coudie.

Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*).—Only observed at West Bay.

Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).—Distributed along coast but not numerous.

Pacific Gull (*Larus pacificus*).—Two birds seen at Cape de Coudie.

Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*).—Ravine des Casoars (mouth), West Bay and Cape de Coudie.

Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*).—Ravine des Casoars, West Bay and Cape de Coudie.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—One pair only observed near Government Apiary.

Hooded Dotterel (*Charadrius cucullatus*).—One pair at mouth of Breakneck River.

Red-capped Dotterel (*C. ruficapillus*).—One pair at West Bay.

Southern Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus magnirostris*).—Weird call of this species heard at Breakneck River and Rocky River area.

White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*).—Swamps near Rocky River. Numerous here, but observed nowhere else in the Chase.

Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis novae-hollandiae*).—One large flock resident at Rocky River homestead.

Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).—Two pairs identified on lagoon at West Bay. Also seen at Breakneck River, but only in flight, and therefore not positively identified.

Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*).—One pair positively identified on Snake Lagoon. Several other birds in the vicinity probably of this species.

Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).—Several birds at Ravine des Casoars (mouth).

Little Black Cormorant (*P. sulcirostris*).—Only recorded at Harvey's Return.

Pied Cormorant (*P. varius*).—Very common. Seen at Harvey's Return, West Bay, Rocky River mouth.

Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*).—Swamps east of Harvey's Return (1 bird) and swamps near Rocky River homestead (2 birds). Flying low over reeds and bushes. White rump clearly distinguishable.

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*).—Between Ravine des Casoars and West Bay, 1 bird only.

White-breasted Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*).—Off the mouth of Breakneck River, 2 birds. Large. Soared to great height. One bird approached close enough to recognise white body and shoulders, tip of tail.

- Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*).—Several birds seen over swampy country east of Rocky River homestead. Fingers on wings prominent.
- Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*).—Distributed throughout the Chase, especially in cleared areas around Rocky River.
- Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).—Heard calling at Harvey's Return, Rocky River area, Kelly Hill. Bird observed at Rocky River homestead.
- Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*).—Numerous in vicinity of Rocky River homestead, in tall gums.
- Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*).—Harvey's Return and Kelly Hill. Also inhabiting tall eucalypts.
- Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*).—One group of about 6 birds seen in Breakneck River Gorge. Several birds also observed near bridge over Rocky River. Readily distinguished from the following.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Kakatoe galerita*).—One pair seen near Rocky River homestead.
- Galah (*K. roseicapilla*).—Harvey's Return, Ravine des Casoars, Rocky River area and Kelly Hill. Fairly numerous in all localities named.
- Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*).—Recorded in all localities throughout the Chase, both in the river gorges and in the open plateau mallee.
- Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*).—Two separate birds seen near Rocky River homestead.
- Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*).—Odd birds seen and heard at both the Ravine des Casoars and Rocky River homestead.
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis pyrrhophanus prionurus*).—Heard calling throughout the Chase as well as at Kelly Hill. Identification of call checked by sight observations in several localities.
- Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*).—Seen and heard at West Bay.
- Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).—Numerous throughout.
- Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*).—Harvey's Return, Ravine des Casoars, West Bay, Rocky River area, Kelly Hill.
- Fairy Martin (*H. ariel*).—One pair identified at Breakneck River. Head rusty. No sign of whitish band around neck (as in *H. nigricans*). Rump purer white than in above species.
- Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*).—Harvey's Return, Ravine des Casoars, West Bay, Rocky River area.
- Willy Wagtail (*R. leucophrys*).—Only recorded at Rocky River homestead and Kelly Hill.
- Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*).—Several birds observed in gums along South-West River.
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*).—Observed at Rocky River homestead and Kelly Hill.
- Grey Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*).—Seen and heard throughout.
- Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*).—Rocky River area and Kelly Hill.
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*).—Harvey's Return, Breakneck River, Rocky River, Kelly Hill.
- Ground Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*).—Observed in thickly scrubbed woodland between Rocky River homestead and the Apiary. Upper brown, marked black. Throat white. Breast buff-colored. Abdomen white, with darker markings.
- White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*).—Along cliff-tops between West Bay and Breakneck River. Also at South-West River.
- Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*).—Harvey's Return, Ravine des Casoars, Rocky River area.
- Striated Thornbill (*A. lineata*).—Harvey's Return, Breakneck River, Rocky River area. Breast more markedly streaked than *A. pusilla*.
- Spotted Scrub-wren (*Sericornis maculatus*).—Cliff-top country between West Bay and Breakneck River, Cape de Coudie.
- Superb Blue-wren (*Malurus cyaneus*).—Recorded groups of this species throughout.
- Southern Emu-wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).—Low scrub along watercourses between Ravine des Casoars and West Bay.
- Dusky Wood-swallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*).—Near Rocky River and at Kelly Hill.
- Red-tipped Pardalote (*Pardalotus ornatus*).—Plentiful throughout.
- Grey-backed Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*).—Rocky River area.
- Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*).—This species appears to be distributed throughout the Chase.
- Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*).—Ravine des Casoars, West Bay, Rocky River and Kelly Hill.
- Tawny Crowned Honeyeater (*Gliciphila mel-*

- anops*).—Positively identified in Rocky River area and near Cape de Coudie.
- Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*).—Recorded evenly throughout mallee and cliff-top country. Not seen in deeper gorges.
- White-plumed Honeyeater (*M. penicillata*).—I thought I saw this species near Rocky River Homestead; requires confirmation.
- Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*).—Very numerous throughout, especially in taller eucalypts, but also in lower mallee.
- Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*).—Also common throughout.
- Red Wattlebird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*).—Only seen and heard in the Rocky River area.
- Groundlark (*Anthus australis*).—Common along the cliff-tops. Also in cleared paddocks near Rocky River Homestead.
- Beautiful Firetail (*Zonaeginthus bellus*).—In thick scrub between Rocky River Homestead and the Apiary. Red rump and finely barred front were diagnostic. Bill reddish.
- Red-browed Finch (*Aegintha temporalis*).—Several flocks seen in the Rocky River area.
- Raven (*Corvus coronoides*).—Distributed throughout but not numerous.
- Black-winged Currawong (*Strepera melanoptera*).—Seen in the tall timber in the Ravine des Casoars, Breakneck River and near Rocky River.
- White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).—Odd birds recorded throughout. Common in the Rocky River area.
- Shy Ground-wren (*Hylacola cauta*).—One bird seen near South-West River. Rump chestnut, white tips to tail and scapula, white eyebrow. Bird under observation from close range.
- Brown Songlark (*Cinclorhamphus cruralis*).—Common along the road between Rocky River and Kelly Hill.