

## THE YELLOW-TUFTED HONEYEATER—A NEW RECORD FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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In the Naracoorte district, during the end of April and beginning of May, large annual flights of wattle-birds and various small honeyeaters may be seen in the timbered areas. The birds appear to be migrating from one feeding ground to another by following the scrub-covered ranges of low hills. Whilst watching some of these flights at Joanna on May 11, 1958, a honeyeater new to us was seen feeding in the flowering Mistletoe (*Loranthus* sp.) growing on the Pink Gums (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*), and after carefully following it for some minutes, two similar birds were found, and all identified as Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga melanops*). Two of these birds were fairly quiet and were kept under observation for some time. They were feeding mostly in the Mistletoe clumps, but also caught a lot of insects on the wing, often flying up above tree-top height to accomplish this.

The next day another part of the same scrub range was visited. Here the Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were quite numerous, and on a return trip to this patch on May 13, 1958, these honeyeaters were present in dozens. Unlike the first examples seen, these birds were nearly all down near the ground and feeding in the early flowering Flame Heath (*Astroloma conostophioides*). Only odd birds were observed darting up after high-flying insects.

The birds were very active, continually quarrelling and chasing each other while feeding, and it was impossible to obtain an accurate count of their numbers.

This being the first occasion on which this species has been found in South Australia, five specimens were collected and forwarded to the South Australian Museum for examination and record.

The only previous occurrence of this species in this district was a sight record (JBH) of a single specimen on August 6, 1939. This bird was noted in open scrub at Killanoola, twenty miles west of Joanna, and was feeding in the lower branches of a

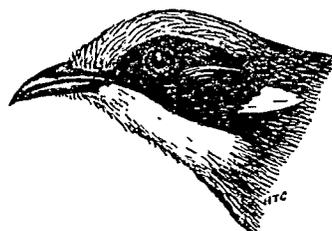


Fig. 1.—Head of Yellow-tufted Honeyeater (*Meliphaga melanops*). (Natural size.)

Top of head, olive green; face and ear-coverts, glossy black; ear-tuft, golden yellow; throat and malar region, golden yellow; foreneck, dull yellow, becoming olive green on breast; nape and upper surfaces, olive grey; iris, dark red; bill, black.

White Ironbark (*E. leucoxydon*) when first seen, but soon flew into the upper branches and was lost in the dense foliage. The nearest locality we know of where this species has been recorded is the Grampians, near Stawell, which is approximately one hundred miles from Joanna. (*S.A. Orn.*, 21, p. 32.)

The following are details of the skins now preserved in the S.A. Museum: Reg. Nos., S.A.M. B25117-25120 (all males with testes not enlarged), B25116 (mounted specimen) (sex ?). Soft parts: irides brown; bill black; feet grey; bare skin around eye black. Measurements: wing 82-88 mm.; tail 85-88 mm.; tarsus 20-22 mm.; bill 16-17 mm. Note: Details for soft parts same in each specimen (colors by Messrs. Attiwill and Hood).