

## NOTES ON EYRE PENINSULA BIRDS

By JOHN ECKERT

During January, 1971, I visited Eyre Peninsula, spending a week at Tumbly Bay where Lipson, Warunda, Coffin Bay and the coast south of Port Lincoln were visited and a week at Arno Bay, where Cleve, Cowell, Midgee and Hincks National Park were journeyed to. The birds of Eyre Peninsula have not been as intensively studied as those in many other parts of South Australia, because of a seeming lack of resident ornithologists. Articles by Hall (1909), White (1912), Cleland (1925) and Rix (1947) are useful references whilst mention must be made of the work by Storr (1947) which listed the Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* and the Southern Emu-Wren *Stipiturus malachurus*. Although these

records were later withdrawn, subsequent events appear to have confirmed the presence of both species.

Condon, in *A Handlist of the Birds of Sth. Australia* 1969, appears to have overlooked some of the records of the three early writers. The A.O.U. campout at Warunda, (Hall 1909), listed the following species which Condon does not indicate as being represented on Eyre Peninsula.

Banded Landrail *Rallus philippensis*—Seen at Wanilla.

Blue-winged Shoveler *Anas rhynchos*—A pair closely observed on a small lagoon by Capt. S. A. White. (See also following list.)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*—Seen at Kellidie Bay. This record might be con-

*The drawing of the Magpie on the cover is by John Cox.*

sidered doubtful were it not that Hall was better versed in waders than most ornithologists of his day, having field experience in Siberia as well as Australia.

Little Wattle-Bird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*—A pair seen, apparently near the Warunda camp. The Red Wattle-Bird *Anthochaera carunculata* was listed also, so the record cannot be regarded as an error for that species.

Four other species mentioned by Hall also warrant comment.

Brown Songlark *Cinclorhynchus cruralis*—A male was recorded in cultivated land at Wanilla so the species has been present on Eyre Peninsula for many years, although Condon's *Handlist* may give the impression that it has only recently been recorded there.

Western Grass-Wren *Amytornis textilis*—Seen at Mortlock. Condon refers to this sighting in the *S.A. Orn.*, 20, 51, but subsequently appears to have disregarded it. It is of interest because of its distance south of other known records.

Blue-and-white Wren *Malurus leucopterus*—Seen at Mortlock. This is considerably further south than indicated by Condon's *Handlist*.

Weebill *Smicronis brevirostris*—Condon's text in both his 1962 and 1969 *Handlists* gives no indication of the presence of the Weebill on Eyre Peninsula, although his distribution map in 1969 shows the species well represented there. It was recorded by the A.O.U. party at Mortlock and has since been recorded on numerous occasions by other writers, notably Sutton.

Other overlooked records include the Painted Quail *Turnix varia*, not listed for Eyre Peninsula by Condon in his 1962 *Handlist* but included in 1969 from recent sightings in the Sleaford area. S. A. White, 1912, recorded seeing the species twice near Pt. Lincoln. (See also following list.) The Double-banded Dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus* is not mentioned for Eyre Peninsula by Condon; but several were seen near Port Lincoln in late May, 1923, by Cleland (1925), and a specimen obtained. See also Eckert (1971), *Emu*, 71, 62. Cleland's record of the Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* is mentioned in the following list.

Several species not recorded for Eyre Peninsula in Condon's *Handlist* (1969) are included in the following list and comments are made on many others. For convenience,

species seen while at Tumby Bay will be referred to as in the south, while 'north' will refer to those seen while at Arno Bay. The following 36 species were seen frequently in both localities and require no special comment. Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*, Black-faced Cormorant *P. fuscescens*, Pied Cormorant *P. varius*, Little Pied Cormorant *P. melanoleucos*, White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*, Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*, Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*, Nankeen Kestrel *F. cenchroides*, Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Sooty Oystercatcher *H. unicolor*, Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*, Red-capped Dotterel *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*, Pacific Gull *L. pacificus*, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne tschegrava*, Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Fairy Tern *S. nereis*, Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*, Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes*, Rock Dove *Columba livia*, Welcome Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*, Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*, White-browed Babbler *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-fronted Chat *Ephthianura albifrons*, Yellow-tailed Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*, Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*, Singing Honeyeater *Meliphaga virescens*, Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys rufogularis*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Murray Magpie *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*, White-backed Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen leuconota*.

#### ANNOTATED LIST

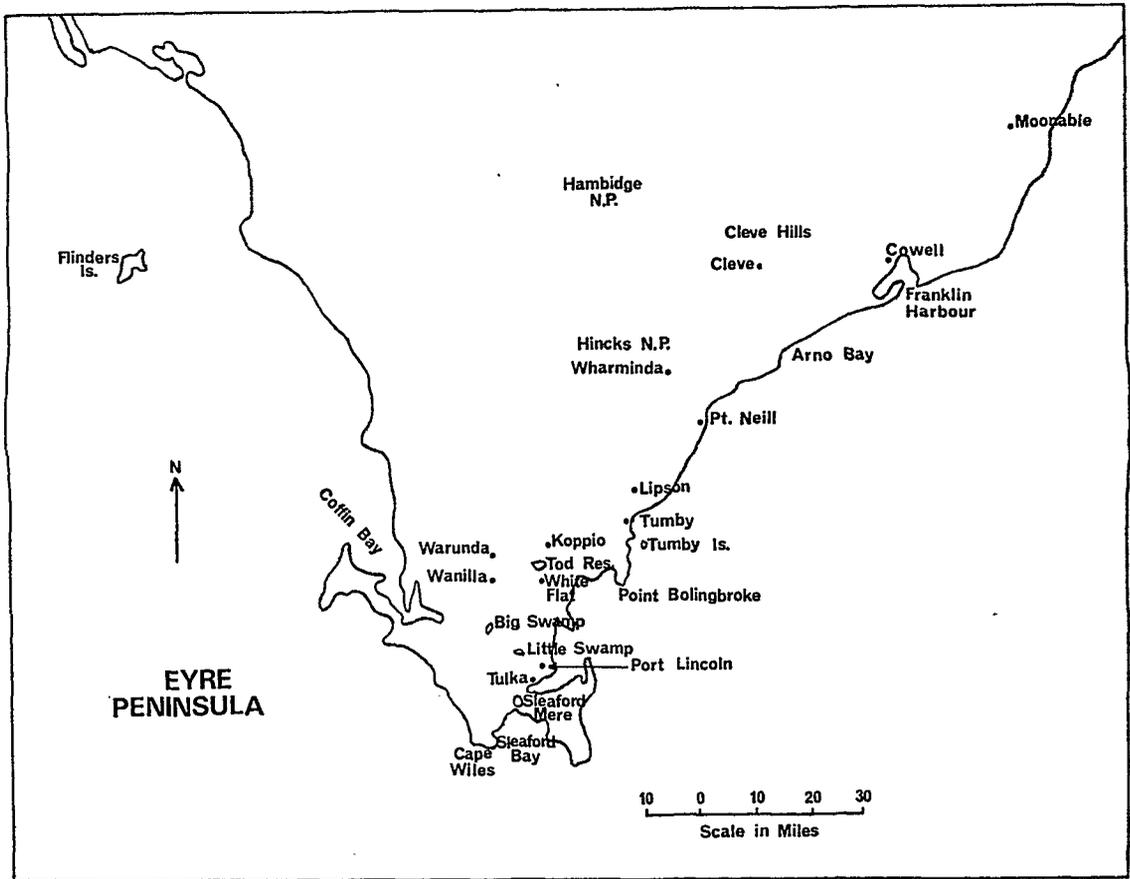
Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae*—Seen at Wanna and at Hincks N.P. Droppings and tracks suggested that it was fairly numerous south and south-west of Port Lincoln.

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*—One swimming near the wharf in Port Lincoln harbor.

Little Grebe *Podiceps novaehollandiae*—Several at Big Swamp.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Podiceps poliocephalus*—Common at Big and Little Swamps. Also seen at Tod Reservoir.

Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*—A flock of four seen twice near Little Swamp.



Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*—About twenty were seen on several occasions feeding along the grassy margins of Little Swamp.

Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*—At least fifty on both Big and Little Swamps.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*—A pair on a small creek at Lipson.

Grey Teal *Anas gibberifrons*—Several hundred on Little and Big Swamps.

Blue-winged Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*—Condon (1969) does not list this species for Eyre Peninsula but flocks of about thirty were present on both Little and Big Swamps, several of the males being in full colour.

Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*—Flock of about fifty on Little Swamp.

White-eyed Duck *Aythya australis*—About fifteen on Big Swamp.

Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*—Flock of twelve on a dam near Koppio.

Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*—A male in full colour on Big Swamp, the reddish body, dark head and pastel-blue bill being clearly seen.

Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*—Several on Tod Reservoir.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*—One only seen at Big Swamp.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*—One large accipiter seen near Koppio.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrocephalus*—Small accipiters, thought to be this species seen several times in scrub south and west of Port Lincoln.

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*—Seen twice in the Koppio hills and also at Hincks N.P.

White-breasted Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*—One over the coast at Wanna.

Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis*—Seen twice near Arno Bay.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*—One near Big Swamp.

Little Falcon *Falco longipennis*—Seen several times in the south.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*—One over the cliffs at Cape Wiles.

Mallee-Fowl *Leipoa ocellata*—Only seen in Hincks N.P. but said to be still present near Arno Bay and Midgee Rocks.

Stubble Quail *Coturnix pectoralis*—Heard calling and one seen at Little Swamp.

Painted Quail *Turnix varia*—Several seen near the Coffin Bay lookout and two flushed in mallee scrub near Midgee Rocks, which is only a few miles from the northern limit of the mallee in this area. T. Sim took a female specimen of this species in scrub near Mt. Wedge in 1969. This specimen is now in the S.A. Museum. It is obvious therefore that the range of the Painted Quail on Eyre Peninsula is much more extensive than that indicated by Condon (1969). The tentative record of the Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophorus* by Storr (1947) seems more likely to be referable to the Painted Quail.

Spotted Crane *Porzana fluminea*—One seen in the mangroves at Arno Bay.

Eastern Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*—Several at Little Swamp.

Coot *Fulica atra*—Several on Big and Little Swamps. Plentiful on Tod Reservoir.

Banded Plover *Vanellus tricolor*—A pair on fallow at Lipson were the only ones seen.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*—A small group of three to six birds frequented Tumbly Is., but the species was much more plentiful in the Franklin Harbor where a scattered flock of thirty-nine Grey Plovers was seen feeding on January 18. This was the largest group of Grey Plovers seen together in S.A. up until that time. Condon (1969) gives no indication of the presence of the species on Eyre Peninsula.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*—Two were regularly seen along the coast about a mile south of Arno Bay and R. R. Cleggett saw three in a tidal marsh south of Tumbly

Bay at about the same time. Condon (1969) does not record this species for the Eyre Peninsula mainland although it is known from Reevesby Is.

Hooded Dotterel *Charadrius rubricollis*—A pair at Arno Bay.

Large Sand-Dotterel *Charadrius leschenaultii*—A single bird was seen feeding with several Red-capped Dotterels on a pebbly part of the beach, exposed at low tide, just south of Arno Bay. The long, heavy bill, long legs and white wing-bar in flight made me certain of its identity. When flushed, it flew back into the tidal swamp. I hoped to gain further field experience with this rare species, which had not previously been reported on Eyre Peninsula, but could not locate it again during the remainder of my stay.

Black-fronted Dotterel *Charadrius melanops*—Two seen at Tod Reservoir.

Australian Dotterel *Peltohyas australis*—Two were present on some fairly bare ground on the property of Mr. Dean Newell at Wharminda. He and his neighbour Mr. E. Jericho, state that some of these birds have visited the Wharminda district annually in recent years, sometimes staying until May.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*—At least twelve were seen around Tumbly Is.

Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*—Three were seen on Tumbly Is. and a flock of nineteen were resting on a sandbar at the mouth of a tidal inlet south of Tumbly Bay.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*—Two frequented some rocky headlands south of Arno Bay. The uniform colour of the upper surface in flight plus the chrome-yellow legs placed them as tattlers, the designation brevipes being based on the two-note call which was heard on one occasion. Tattlers were previously unrecorded on Eyre Peninsula.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*—Odd birds seen at many places along the coast and a flock of about twenty present at Little Swamp.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*—About ten were present with the Greenshanks at Little Swamp, thus enabling the smaller body size to be clearly seen. The very long legs trailing well beyond the tail in flight, and the 'yipping' call were also noted. This species was another addition to the Eyre Peninsula List.

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*—A single bird was often seen along a rocky part of the coast south of Arno Bay and several more frequented the tidal creeks among the mangroves in the Arno swamp.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*—Small flocks often seen along the coast. Plentiful at Little Swamp and three seen at Tod Reservoir.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*—Two were present at Little Swamp where there was some mud with short green weeds and grass similar to its favoured habitat on Lake Alexandrina. The yellow legs were seen and both Red-necked Stints and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were nearby to enable the necessary size and colour comparisons to be made. This species was also previously unrecorded for Eyre Peninsula.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*—Small flocks seen at Tumbly Is., Coffin Bay, Little Swamp, Arno Bay and Franklin Harbor, but large flocks were not seen anywhere on the trip.

White-headed Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*—At least fifty on Little Swamp.

Banded Stilt *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*—About thirty on Little Swamp and several hundred in Franklin Harbor.

Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*—Plentiful south of Port Lincoln and a few in the coastal sand-dunes at Arno Bay.

Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*—Plentiful everywhere. Several hundred were feeding on the road near Port Lincoln, apparently on grain spilt from trucks. Although nearly twenty had been killed by traffic, the flock was very reluctant to rise from the path of oncoming vehicles.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*—A pair at Big Swamp.

Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*—Fairly plentiful in the Koppio hills where Sugar Gum was flowering. Some 2-300 were seen.

Purple-crowned Lorikeet *Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*—Plentiful also in the flowering eucalypts near Koppio.

Port Lincoln Parrot *Barnardius zonarius*—Very numerous in the south. Seldom seen in the north but three pairs were present in Hincks N.P.

Mulga Parrot *Psephotus varius*—Seen occasionally north of Cowell.

Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans*—Pastor I. B. Wittwer of Cleve had a bird

of this species in captivity. It had been hit by a car a few days previously about ten miles north of Cleve on the Kimba road. A flock of about fifty had been in the area at the time. Storr (1947) recorded *elegans* with a query, but Condon (1969) lists neither for Eyre Peninsula. As the range of *elegans* includes south-western Western Australia it is not surprising that it should also occur on Eyre Peninsula.

Rock Parrot *Neophema petrophila*—Seen on several occasions along the coast in the south and about six inhabited the samphire and coastal dunes at the Arno swamp.

Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*—Seen in the Koppio hills and also in coastal scrub near the Arno swamp. Storr (1947) listed the Black-eared Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx osculans*, but it is obvious from his description that the bird was an immature Bronze-Cuckoo, most likely this species.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*—One dead on the road south of Tumbly Bay.

Boobook Owl *Ninox novaeseelandiae*—One dead on the road at Tulka.

Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguinae*—Often seen in the Sugar Gum country of the south.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sanctus*—One in the Koppio hills and others in the mangroves of the tidal swamps at Tumbly and Arno Bays.

Horsfield Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*—Seen in stubble at Warunda and Wharminda.

Tree Martin *Petrochelidon nigricans*—Only seen occasionally in the south.

Fairy Martin *Petrochelidon ariel*—One on telephone wires at White Flat.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*—Several heard singing at Wanna.

Southern Scrub-Robin *Drymodes brunneopygia*—Seen at Point Bolingbroke, Midgee and in the Cleve hills.

Chestnut Quail-Thrush *Cinlosoma castanotum*—Present in mallee a few miles north of Cowell and seen again at Moonabie just before the mallee gives way to bluebush.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*—Seen and heard in a creek near Tod Reservoir.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*—Several frequented a bamboo thicket near an orchard at Little Swamp and, although quite active, did not call until nearly sunset. Condon (1969) doubted the presence of this species on Eyre Peninsula.

Brown Songlark *Cinchorhamphus cruralis*—A male and female seen in stubble at Whar-minda close to Hincks N.P.

Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*—Very plentiful, particularly in the south.

Scrub-Wren *Sericornis frontalis*—Common in the south, seen also in coastal scrub near Cowell and in the Hincks N.P.

Shy Heath-Wren *Hylacola cauta*—Often seen in mallee near Cleve, Cowell and Midgee.

Rufous Field-Wren *Calamanthus fuliginosus*—Plentiful in coastal heath at Wanna and Cape Wiles.

Blue Wren *Malurus cyaneus*—Common in the south.

Blue-breasted Wren *Malurus pulcherrimus*—Seen at Point Bolingbroke (specimens) and Hincks N.P. A chestnut-shouldered Wren in the Cleve hills was not seen well enough for positive identification.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*—Seen occasionally in the Koppio hills and near the Tod Reservoir.

Western Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*—Seen frequently in the south, mainly in wetter areas, but also in drier coastal scrub at Coffin Bay and Point Bolingbroke.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*—One near Tod Reservoir.

Western Thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*—Often seen, but only in the south.

Crested Bellbird *Oreoica gutturalis*—Two seen on Hincks N.P.

Yellow-tailed Pardalote *Pardalotus xanthopygus*—Seen in mallee near Midgee.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus substriatus*—Recorded occasionally in the south.

Purple-gaped Honeyeater *Meliphaga cratitia*—Seen only near Lipson.

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater *Meliphaga ornata*—Seen only near Lipson.

White-eared Honeyeater *Meliphaga leucotis*—Seen often near Cleve and Midgee.

Yellow-winged Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*—Occasionally seen in the south.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater *Phylidonyris melanops*—Seen frequently near the coast.

Yellow-throated Miner *Myzantha flavigula*—Common in the north down as far as Port Neill.

Red Wattle-Bird *Anthochaera carunculata*—Seen occasionally, but abundant in the Koppio hills where the Sugar Gum was flowering.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*—A pair were nesting in a Norfolk Island Pine at Coffin Bay. Condon (1969) does not list this species for Eyre Peninsula but it has been recorded previously on occasions and was apparently present in the vicinity of Port Lincoln as early as 1923 (Cleland, 1925).

Diamond Firetail *Emblema guttata*—Seen near Sleaford Mere and near Koppio.

White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphus*—A flock in the Koppio hills.

Black-faced Wood-Swallow—*Artamus cinereus*—A small group were seen in blue-bush country just north of Moonabie. (The species was then seen several more times before reaching Port Augusta).

Dusky Wood-Swallow *Artamus cyanopterus*—A few seen in the south. A pair were present on Tumbly Is.

Brown Currawong *Strepera versicolor*—Widespread but not plentiful.

Raven *Corvus coronoides*—A pair near the Cowell jetty were listed as *coronoides* because of the long drawn-out, wailing call.

Little Raven *Corvus mellori*—Plentiful.

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