

SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF KANGAROO ISLAND

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SPOTTED HARRIER *Circus assimilis*.

On 13 December 1975 Parker watched for some minutes a Spotted Harrier flying low over a field of grain near Kangaroo Lagoon, about 24 km west of Parndana. He obtained excellent views of the bird as it flew slowly towards him and passed about 5 m above his head. The only previous record we can find of the occurrence of this species on Kangaroo Island is that of J. B. Hood (1970) who on 24 November 1970 saw one bird near Cape Borda.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*.

On 7 December 1975 Lashmar and Parker observed three Peregrine Falcons circling above sea-cliffs at Pennington Bay on the south coast of Kangaroo Island. We can find two previous records for the island, one of which appears to be unpublished. In the South Australian Museum there is an adult male, B23999, collected on 24 March 1950 on the Cygnet River by A. Rau. Miles (1953) reported that an individual had been resident on Flinders Chase 'throughout the summer,' but gave no year. The species may well nest on the high cliffs of the island's southern coast.

BAILLON'S (MARSH) CRAKE *Porzana pusilla*.SPOTLESS CRAKE *P. tabuensis*.SPOTTED CRAKE *P. fluminea*.

Baillon's Crake was first reported from Kangaroo Island by Lashmar (1936), who wrote: 'One bird was observed walking on the ends of branches of a teatree growing in water about three feet deep, undisturbed by my presence, and continued feeding quietly. Often seen on mud banks near reeds on the [Lashmar's] Lagoon.' Subsequently he reported (Lashmar 1937); 'On 15th November [1936], two nests ready for eggs, and one being built. All the nests were about six inches above the water in reeds growing in the water.' In the period 1 October 1945-1 March 1946 Lashmar (1946) again noted Baillon's Crake breeding on Lashmar's Lagoon, but gave no details.

On 23 October 1946 Lashmar collected at the Lagoon a clutch of five eggs that he attributed to Baillon's Crake. This clutch is now in the South Australian Museum, B28003. Information with the clutch reads: 'Incubation commenced. Well concealed saucer-shaped nest of teatree bark and reed flags. Placed over a

nearly horizontal fork of a thin teatree limb, around and through which grew a patch of reeds. About 30" above water about 18" deep. Bird flushed.'

Comparison of this clutch with other material in the South Australian Museum shows that it is not of Baillon's Crake but the Spotless Crake (the difference between the eggs of these species is pronounced). This appears to be the first record of Spotless Crake for Kangaroo Island.

Baillon's Crake, however, remains on the Kangaroo Island list on the basis of the sight-record reported by Lashmar (1936), and the following unpublished records:

- a) Clutch of three eggs collected by A. F. C. Lashmar, Lashmar's Lagoon, 24 November 1935: 'Nest made by a few trampled-down reed stems forming a slightly concave structure. Built just above the water in a clump of reeds—well concealed. Eggs warm when taken. Incubation commenced.'
- b) Clutch of five eggs collected by Lashmar, Lashmar's Lagoon, 22 December 1935: 'Nest composed of fine flags stripped from reeds, twisted and twined together, forming a slightly concave structure about 3" diam. Placed about 2 ft. above the water in a thick patch of reeds about 5 ft. high. No bird seen but eggs warm when taken. Incubation slight.'

These two clutches are in the possession of Mr. G. B. Ragless.

The Spotted Crake *Porzana fluminea* has also nested at Lashmar's Lagoon. Lashmar (1939) found two nests with eggs on 13 and 27 November 1938, in teatree branches just above the water. The clutch found on 13 November is now in the SAM (B28002); its accompanying data-slip reads: 'Four eggs. Incubation slight. Open saucershaped nest of dried water weeds and grasses, with a base of reed flags. Placed just above the water in a horizontal forked teatree bough.'

A third nest of *P. fluminea* was found by Mr. G. B. Ragless at Lashmar's Lagoon on 5 December 1970; the details are: 'One egg, fresh. Wellmade cup nest of rushes placed low down in rushes in shallow water. A damaged egg also in nest, which appeared neglected.' The undamaged egg is in Mr. Ragless's possession.

The only other report of the Spotted Crake from Kangaroo Island seems to be that of the

Bains (1976), who noted two birds on the Rocky River on 13 March 1976.

REDTHROAT *Sericornis brunneus*.

SHY HYLACOLA *Sericornis cautus*.

On 22 July 1939* at Antechamber Bay, Kangaroo Island, Lashmar found a nest with three small dark brown eggs (Lashmar 1942). This clutch is now in the South Australian Museum, B28021. According to notes accompanying the clutch, the nest was about 18 inches up in a dead mallee bough, composed of strips of soft bark, fine grasses, rootlets and a few skeleton leaves, and lined warmly with soft grasses and feathers. A similar nest with similarly very dark eggs was found in the same district by Lashmar on 15 August 1936. In neither case did he see the parent birds. Although he initially identified both clutches as of the Shy Hylacola, he re-identified them as belonging to the Redthroat after comparing them with eggs of both species in the South Australian Museum. These two records are the only ones of the Redthroat from Kangaroo Island.

With the help of Mr. G. B. Ragless we re-examined the clutch B28021. We compared it with nine clutches of the Redthroat and nine of the Shy Hylacola. In intensity of ground-colour both series were variable, from very pale to very dark grey-brown, though there were more dark eggs of the Redthroat than of the Shy Hylacola. The clutch in question is very dark, and matches two clutches of the former and one of the latter. Also, the eggs of the Redthroat are on average smaller than those of the Shy Hylacola, and the present clutch matches the latter species in this respect. In the opinion of Mr. Ragless, the description of the nests of B28021 fits that of the Shy Hylacola better than that of the Redthroat.

The Redthroat is chiefly a species of the semi-arid regions of the Australian mainland, frequenting saltbush, bluebush, Lignum, Bullockbush and similar cover. Apart from the two records under discussion, it has not been found in mallee, and there are no other records from Kangaroo Island. On the other hand, the Shy Hylacola is not uncommon in mallee on Kangaroo Island. We now consider it more likely that these records are referable to the Shy Hylacola rather than to the Redthroat.

* not 1942 as given by Terrill & Rix (1950 : 88) and subsequent authors.

AUSTRALIAN RAVEN *Corvus coronoides*.

Abbott (1974) wrote of the status of this species on Kangaroo Island: 'Record (no details) of a non-breeding specimen (Rowley

1970).' Dr. Rowley has kindly sent Parker copies of the data-sheets of his South Australian specimens of *C. coronoides*, together with a copy of the corresponding master-map. Comparison of these base-records with the distribution map of *C. coronoides* in Rowley 1970: 49 reveals that in the latter map the symbols for breeding and non-breeding specimens have been transposed in the caption. Dr. Rowley's material of *C. coronoides* from Kangaroo Island is:

R659, adult female with large brood-patch, oviduct convoluted; Cape Borda road at Gosse Hall, 20 July 1966, on sheep-grazing property near mallee. Collected by R. Coles.

R1245, adult male; south coast road at Vivonne Bay turnoff, 26 August 1966. Collected by R. Coles.

R1251, nestling female; collected with same shot as R1245.

In the South Australian Museum there is a subadult female of *C. coronoides*, B6361, collected at Vivonne Bay on 26 January 1926 by H. M. Hale. Mr. H. J. Eckert (pers. comm.), during a visit to Kangaroo Island in January 1976, noted *C. coronoides* as widespread in the southern parts of the island, though not as numerous as the Little Raven *C. mellori*. Although more work needs to be done here, it is possible that *C. coronoides* is a not uncommon resident on Kangaroo Island.

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