

SIGHTING OF A GREY FALCON AT LANGHORNE CREEK

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On 7 September 1978, our attention was drawn to a pale, fast-flying bird of prey by a chorus of alarm calls from a group of White-plumed Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus penicillatus*. The bird was flying over the tops of an isolated patch of *Eucalyptus spp.* grazing on an open pasture three km east of Langhorne Creek. It flew with a typically swift falcon-like flight characterised by regular, shallow wingbeats interspersed with gliding.

The falcon was smaller and much more slender than a Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*, with which it was at one stage seen in the same field of binocular vision at a distance of approximately 100 m. It was uniformly pale grey on the upperparts, and uniformly off-white on the underparts. An impression of darker colouration on the upper primaries was obtained. The wings were long and pointed. The bird was in sight for less than two minutes before it disappeared beyond the tree-line. There was no doubt that the object of our attention was a Grey Falcon *Falco hypoleucos*, a species with which both of us have had field experience in far western Queensland.

The Grey Falcon is essentially a denizen of the arid inland of Australia, and only rarely reaches coastal regions. There are few records of the species from such regions in South Australia. Condon (1969) notes that a specimen has been taken at Fulham, south of Adelaide (S. A. White), and records a personal sighting from the Mannum area in August, 1964. Cox (1973) saw another Grey Falcon near Mannum in August, 1970. R. Jaensch (1976) saw one near Rockleigh, in the eastern Mt. Lofty Ranges, on 18 April 1974. A bird was reported by L. J. Ellis to have been disturbed from a nest near Langhorne Creek in September 1951 (Glover, 1952). This record, if authentic, seems exceptional.

The Grey Falcon is undoubtedly a scarce bird even in the interior of Australia, and its irregular and infrequent appearances in coastal districts are of considerable interest.

REFERENCES

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