

AN INFLUX OF WHITE-NAPED HONEY-EATERS IN A SALISBURY GARDEN —

During the first half of March 1978 some White-naped Honeyeaters *Melithreptus lunatus* were glimpsed several times in a suburban garden in Salisbury, 21 km N. of Adelaide. This was a species not noticed before (except perhaps once) in the garden. During the following days more and more of these birds appeared, until it became commonplace to see numbers at any time of the day in the bushes and trees, foraging over the leaves and twigs, or drinking from the bird-bath which they patronised heavily, as many as eight coming down to the water at a time. Sprinklers attracted them by the dozen to bathe, especially when the water was spraying into leafy branches. It is possible that the water supply drew them into the area, as the season was particularly dry even for an Adelaide summer, and there was no especially heavy blooming of honey-bearing flowers at the time.

At a guess up to 40-50 were present at any one time in the garden which backs onto several acres of open grassy space. There was no way of telling whether the same birds were seen repeatedly, or whether they were different members of a larger flock moving through the district. But, during the later weeks of their presence many more — roughly half — “young-looking” birds were noticed, more speckled or blotched and fluffy-looking than the others. It is possible that these were moulting birds.

On the night of 8 April a heavy hailstorm and rain drenched the district, and no White-naped were seen next day. The rain did not persist and the birds reappeared as dry conditions recurred; by 13 April large numbers were again present. More rain on the 14th dispersed them again, and thereafter they were seen less and less, as the mornings became damp with the break in the season. A few at a time would drink at the bird-bath if the afternoon was warm and dry; otherwise they were scarce, and since further heavy rain on 25 April 1978 they have not been seen here again to this day (18 March 1979). — A. HARDY.

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