

## BROWN HONEYEATER NEAR COOBER PEDY

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### INTRODUCTION

South Australia forms a large anomalous gap in the wide distribution of the Brown Honeyeater *Lichmera indistincta*. In Western Australia this bird ranges from the tropical Kimberly, southward through woodland, shrubland and savannah habitats, closely comparable to those occurring within South Australia. This sort of comparison allows one to ponder whether the Brown Honeyeater is excluded from the major part of this state by some ecological factors, and if not, then whether it is extending its range into South Australia.

Whatever the ecological implications, there are only seven reports from the State, six of these from the North-West (Matheson 1981). The present sighting falls between the north-western records and the southern-most record, a clutch of eggs taken from the Gawler Ranges (Matheson 1981).

### OBSERVATION

A single bird was sighted near Lagoon Waterhole on Mabel Creek station 53 km WSW of Coober Pedy, 29° 10' S, 134° 15' E, on 25 November 1984.

A White-plumed Honeyeater *Meliphaga penicillata* was observed at close range in a Dead-finish *Acacia tetragonaphylla*. A short time later it was replaced by a smaller honeyeater, with a longer, more curved bill and a prominent yellow gape. The plumage was dull olive-grey above, lighter below, and darker round the eye with a small yellow mark behind the eye.

### HABITAT

The bird was seen in a Dead-finish surrounded by much ephemeral growth including *Psoralea cinerea* up to 2 m tall. The location was within the watercourse vegetation of Mabel Creek itself. The more obvious elements of that vegetation were Coolibah *Eucalyptus microtheca*, Brush *Melaleuca uncinata* and some Mulga *Acacia anerua* and *A. brachystachya*.

### DISCUSSION

The observation was not repeated despite return visits to the same spot by the author and other observers, plus extensive survey work in the adjacent area over two weeks. My experience with this species in north-western Australia, indicates that this is generally a gregarious and noisy bird and as such is not easily overlooked. When silent however its unimpressive plainness is surpassed by few other honeyeaters as its specific name implies.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### REFERENCE

Matheson, W.E. 1981. The Brown Honeyeater in South Australia. *S. Aust. Orn* 28: 180-184.

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