

A ROSE ROBIN IN THE SWAN REACH CONSERVATION PARK, MURRAY MALLEE

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The Rose Robin *Petroica rosea* breeds in summer in eastern New South Wales and southern Victoria, then disperses northwards in winter (Blakers *et al.* 1984). There is some westward movement in autumn and winter, as indicated by a total of 16 reliable South Australian records in the period 1967-1982, listed by Reid *et al.* (1984). Of these 16 records, nine were of obviously male birds, two "partly coloured" birds were possibly male, and the remaining five birds were "uncoloured". Eleven were seen on the Adelaide Plains, three (including a pair) in the Mount Lofty Ranges, and one record was noted from each of the Lower North and Eyre Peninsula. Of the 16 sightings, six were in autumn, nine in winter, and one in spring. We now present the first record from the Murray Mallee.

At 16.15 on 1 May 1988 we were in Swan Reach Conservation Park, about 120 km NE of Adelaide, near the main N-S track accessible from the Sedan-Swan Reach road (Bransbury 1987). It was a clear still day with a temperature of ca 25°C. Near the track we saw an adult male Rose Robin and observed it at 2-10m for 30 min through 10X binoculars. We were alerted by the bright pink breast and grey upperparts. The back was generally grey, but with darker wing feathers. The head and throat were grey, with a clear demarcation between throat and bright pink breast. The abdomen was white. There was a small white mark above the bill. The bill, legs and eye were dark.

During the observation period, the bird was extremely active, flitting constantly about the observers, with much wing drooping and cocking of the tail. On several occasions the bird cocked its tail while facing away from us, enabling us to note that the white abdomen was continuous with a white undertail, marked by a thin transverse black bar in the area of the vent. The outer tail feathers, spread during wing-drooping, were white.

The habitat in the observation area was open mallee scrub, with trees to 5m in height. The bird did not spend any time on the ground.

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