

DISTRIBUTION OF THE BLUE-BREASTED FAIRY-WREN NEAR THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN–WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BORDER. Carpenter and Matthew (1997) reported sighting several groups of Blue-breasted Fairy-wren *Malurus pulcherrimus* in low mallee and tea-tree 12 km ESE (31°39'S, 129°09'E) of Border Village on 17 November 1995 and 3 and 9 km ESE of Border Village on 6–9 May 1996. Although no coloured males were seen, the fairy-wrens were all identified as *M. pulcherrimus* from the pale red-brown rather than chestnut lores of female-plumaged birds. We would like to support these observations and to correct the distribution of this species given by us recently (Rowley and Russell 1997).

On 30 September 1997, we drove 1.1 km along a track running north of the Eyre Highway (25 km E of Border Village) through low mallee and tea-tree vegetation to a limestone quarry. We used a 'play-back' tape that we have repeatedly used successfully during our long-term study of *M. pulcherrimus* in Dryandra State Forest, SW Western Australia (unpublished). Immediately a pair of fairy-wrens approached us and remained within close view for 10 minutes; twice the male, in full breeding plumage, carried a yellow petal in his bill as he followed the female. We are familiar with both *M. pulcherrimus* and

Variegated Fairy-wren *M. lamberti assimilis* and are quite certain, from plumage and song, that the birds we saw were *M. pulcherrimus*. The time was 1430 h, and the track off the highway was 200 m W of the peg indicating 25 km E of the border. Later, 5 km to the west and 700 m N of the highway, we called up another pair of *M. pulcherrimus*; the male, again, was in full breeding plumage. The habitat at these two sites was very low and open (see Figure 1).

We failed to locate *M. pulcherrimus* at other sites north and south of the highway, including those reported by Carpenter and Matthew (1997), between the 20 km peg and the border. Nor did we manage to locate any the next morning as we drove west, near Eucla nor at several other likely sites, until we approached Eyre Bird Observatory where they are regularly seen.

REFERENCES

- Carpenter, G. A. and Matthew, J. S. 1997. Notes on some mallee birds of the far south-west of South Australia. *South Australian Ornithologist*, 32, 134-139.
 Rowley, I. and Russell, E. 1997. *Fairy-wrens and Grasswrens: Maluridae*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

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Figure 1. *Malurus pulcherrimus* habitat—low, open mallee and tea-tree—25 km E of the South Australian–Western Australian border. Vehicle at top right indicates scale. (Photo. I. Rowley)