

**A SQUARE-TAILED KITE RECORD FROM NEAR BLEWITT SPRINGS, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.** This note documents a sighting of the Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* from the Blewitt Springs area of the Fleurieu Peninsula of South Australia. The record was made on a flower farm about 10 km NW of McLaren Vale (35°11'S, 138°37'E), which is 30 km S of Adelaide. The Australian native and South African proteaceous plants are mainly 1–3 metres tall and the property's boundaries are planted with shelter belts of

eucalypts, casuarinas and radiata pine *Pinus radiata* that are 10 years old. On 4 February 1999 a large raptor was observed for more than 10 minutes systematically flying low over rows of shelter belt trees on the property. The bird's most obvious characteristics were its large size and upswept wings when gliding. Other features observed were its long wings, widest at the tips; long, barred primaries; a flat tail, with a black band at the tip; prominent white windows in the wing; and a white head. The kite's gliding search pattern just above the tops of

the shelter belt trees was only interrupted when it was harassed by a pair of Little Ravens *Corvus mellori* and when it dropped down into the foliage of a tree for a short time. It was impossible to see what the bird was doing at this time. A similar bird was again seen on 7 February 1999. Moreover, it is likely that a large raptor seen fleetingly gliding above a row of trees on the property in February 1998 was also a Square-tailed Kite. On this occasion the bird was chased away by a group of Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen* and this together with poor light did not allow a positive identification.

The Square-tailed Kite is rarely observed in the southern parts of South Australia and there are only six confirmed records from the Adelaide area (Debus 1991; Debus 1993). Two of these are in the vicinity of the above record: one is a specimen from Blackwood (35°01'S, 138°37'E) from 1913; and the other is a sight record from Clapham (34°59'S, 138°36'E) in 1975. The sighting detailed in this note is the most southerly for the Mt Lofty Ranges, although

there are more southerly records for the state, for example from Kangaroo Island and the South East. The Square-tailed Kite is regarded as a spring-summer breeding migrant to southern Australia (Debus 1991) and this sighting of a bird in late summer is consistent with this pattern.

The paucity of records from the Adelaide district where there is a high density of observers supports Debus' (1991) conclusion that the Square-tailed Kite is a rare, declining and probably threatened species in South Australia.

#### REFERENCES

- Debus, S.J.S. 1991. The Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* in South Australia. *South Australian Ornithologist*, 31, 57-71.
- Debus, S.J.S. 1993. Further comments on the Square-tailed Kite in South Australia. *South Australian Ornithologist*, 31, 145-146.
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Received: 29 May 1999