

**COMMENTS ON SOME BIRDS OF THE BIRDSVILLE TRACK.** During 21–30 August 2001 I accompanied J. Ragless and L. Potts on a return trip from Marree to Birdsville along the Birdsville Track, an area previously unvisited by me. Year 2001 was considered to have been an excellent season and followed several years of good rainfall. Pools of water were still present in some places, therefore a number of waterbird species were encountered and some warrant comment. F.E. Parsons (1921) gave details of a trip through this area in August–September 1920, while L.R. Reese, who resided in the area, sent bird notes to the *South Australian Ornithologist* over a number of years in the 1920s and 1930s. Cox and Pedler (1977) have given a comprehensive account of birds of the larger north-eastern area of South Australia, while Foale (1975), Badman (1979, 1987, 1989), Parker *et al.* (1979), Parker, Eckert and Ragless (1985), Reid (1988, 2000) and Reid, Badman and Parker (1990) all include information of relevance to the area.

A flock of seven Freckled Duck *Stictonetta naevosa* was seen on the extensive swamp at Blaze's Well by L. Potts on 26 August. Neither Parson's (1921) nor Cox and Pedler (1977) recorded this species. Badman (1979) saw a few in and near Lake Hope and Horton (2000) has mapped several locations in the north-east where the Coongie Lake area appears to be a stronghold.

An Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* was seen flying at Damperanie Creek on 25 August and two were noted at the Clayton crossing on 29 August. The distribution map in Horton (2000, p. 59) does not indicate the presence of this species in the north of South Australia. This was due to an inadvertent omission of sight

records from the area (P. Horton, pers. comm.). Although not mentioned by either Parsons (1921) or Reese, it has been recorded by all subsequent authors. It is the least frequently recorded of the three ibis species to visit the area and is usually only seen in small numbers. It has not been recorded breeding in the area, unlike both other ibis species.

We encountered the Straw-necked Ibis *T. spinicollis* rather frequently wherever water was present and saw a flock of about 20 Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* on the Pandiburra bore drain. Neither Parsons (1921) nor Cox and Pedler (1977) recorded the latter, but Horton (2000) showed both as well represented in the area. Reese (1930) mentioned the former breeding in hundreds at two localities on the Diamantina River, together with a few Glossy Ibis.

A Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis* was seen skulking through the saltbush and shrubs immediately behind the sedges of the Mungeranie bore drain. Its behaviour gave suspicion that it may have been nesting but a brief search found no sign of such activity. Cox and Pedler (1977) cited one being caught in a mammal trap near New Kalamurina on the Warburton River in 1975. Four observations at Coongie by Reid (2000) between February 1988 and November 1997 are the only other records from the north-east.

An adult Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* was observed from a distance of less than 3 m as it fed along the margin of the sedges at the edge of the Mungeranie bore drain, moving at times to forage in small clumps just out from the fringing edge. The small size, pale under-surface, bright tawny-brown of the upper neck and wings plus lack of

red at the base of the bill substantiated identification. The presence of numerous travellers may have caused it to be less wary than usual. Cox and Pedler (1977) cited a record from Coongie Lake where the bird was viewed at one metre distance from a drifting boat. Reid (2000) also has three sightings of single birds from Coongie (December 1990, 1991, November 1997).

Two male Black Honeyeaters *Certhionyx niger* were seen at a small creek a few kilometres east of Damperanie Creek on 25 August. A small grove of weeping emubush *Eremophila longifolia*, a known favoured food tree for this species (Hobbs 1958), was in flower there, while nearby a large hakea *Hakea* sp. also had flowers. Although Pied Honeyeaters *C. variegatus* were seen often throughout, the Black Honeyeater was not encountered again along the Birdsville Track but was present again around Lyndhurst, where it was nesting. Schodde and Mason (1999) and Horton (2000) indicated a lack of evidence for the presence of Black Honeyeaters in north-eastern South Australia. A recently-published record of six males at Damperanie Creek on 13 July 2000 (Rogers 2002) suggests that presence in that area is not unusual at times of favourable conditions.

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