

## South-West Australian Birds.

—By F. E. Parsons.—

The following notes and observations were made during a holiday trip to South-Western Australia between September 17th and October 23rd, 1922. The trip both over and the return was by the Trans-Australian Railway. This afforded me a couple of hours at Kalgoorlie to wander through the short scrub west of the town. I was very sorry to see the very marked change that had taken place here since the time when I knew it very well, between 1902 and 1908. Whole streets of houses had been demolished on the outskirts, and business generally appeared to be very much lagging. During the short ramble through this scrub I noticed several small lots of *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, a few pairs of *Oreoica gutturalis*, *Mclopsittacus undulatus*, *Ephthianura albifrons*, *Ephthianura tricolor*, *Glyciptila albifrons*, *Ptilotis plumula*, *Gymnorhina* species?, *Malurus leucopterus*, and *Colluricincla rufiventris*. Also on the return journey we were held up for three hours at Barton, due to the train that should have passed us at this station from Port Augusta having some slight mishap. Most of this time was occupied in trying to secure specimens of a pair of *Malurus callainus*, as I was anxious to have them for my collection, but these birds were not much in evidence, only one pair being seen. In fact, apart from the Crow, which was very plentiful; there were very few other birds about. The West Australian districts visited were:—

(1) KELLERBERRIN, on the Perth to Kalgoorlie Railway, about 130 miles from Perth, a very good hay-growing district, slightly undulating country clothed with bushes and short scrub, with here and there patches of good stout timber.

(2) MUNDARING, situated 21 miles east of Perth in the low range of hills that runs south for many miles. These hills are well timbered with Redgums and Jarrals, with a good growth of low shrubs and grasstrees that give cover to great numbers of *Acanthizac* of different species and of *Malurus splendens*.

(3) BUNBURY, on the coast, 115 miles south of Perth, where bird life is very plentiful both in the sandhills bordering the coast and the low timber on the margins of the estuary and swampy land.

(4) BRIDGETOWN, a very pretty country place, 174 miles south from Perth, in the midst of the good Jarrah country.

(5) PEMBERTON, until recently known as Big Brook, which is about 218 miles from Perth, and perhaps 10 miles from the South Coast, almost on the Warren River. Pemberton boasts of having the largest timber-mill in W.A. It is owned and managed by the State. The sight of felling and hauling of the large Karri trees here is one never to be forgotten. Some of the trees are as much as 10 feet in diameter, quite solid. When felled they are sawn into various lengths, averaging about 20 feet, then supported on large jinkers, with wheels about 12 feet in diameter, and hauled to the railway landing by teams of splendid draught horses 21 strong. The shouts and whip-cracking of the teamsters reverberating in the valleys as they urge the horses to their heavy task can be heard at great distances, and must strike with awe the animals and birds in the near vicinity. A very striking feature about the whole of the districts visited was the paucity of the Honey-eaters. In a country well wooded, and where there is an abundance of flowering shrubs, one would expect to find great numbers of nectar-eating birds, but that was not my experience. Of course, I am speaking comparatively with the percentage of Honey-eaters in South Australia. The following is a list of the birds noted:—

1. *Coturnix pectoralis*, Stubble Quail.—Heard in the standing crops.
2. *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*, Collared Sparrowhawk.—One specimen, a male, was taken at Kellerberrin. Many different Hawks were seen, but as they were not actually handled I will not attempt to identify them.
3. except in the case of the Kestrel, which was fairly plentiful, and easy of identification.
4. *Glossopsitta porphurocephala*, Purple-crowned Lorikeet.—Feeding in the blossoming trees.
5. *Calyptrorhynchus baudini*, White-tailed Black Cockatoo.—These birds were plentiful, especially at Pemberton, where they were in flocks of about 12 to 20 birds, and were feeding on the seed pods of the Redgums, the sap

- from which gets smothered on the bill and gives the appearance of bleeding from the mouth. One nesting hollow was noticed containing young.
6. *Platyercus icterotis*, Yellow-cheeked Parrot.—A few of these were met with at Mundaring; but at Pemberton they were plentiful.
  7. *Barnardius occidentalis*, Northern Yellow-banded Parrot.—Plentiful at Kellerberrin, where they were feeding along the edges of the crops, but were not seen further south.
  8. *Melopsittacus undulatus*, Warbling Grass-Parrot.—Only seen at Kalgoorlie.
  9. *Podargus strigoides*, Short-winged Frogmouth.—Three pairs were flushed in the day-time. They were in pairs, and close together on the ground. No nests were seen.
  10. *Halcyon sanctus*, Sacred Kingfisher.—Odd birds seen in all localities.
  11. *Merops ornatus*, Australian Bee-eater.—A few pairs at Kellerberrin.
  12. *Cacomantis rufulus*, Fantailed Cuckoo.—Several birds seen and heard. One egg of this species of Cuckoo was taken with a pair of *Acanthiza apicalis*.
  13. *Chalcites basalis*, Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo.—A young bird of this species was being fed by a pair of *Acanthiza uropygialis*.
  14. *Lamprocoryza playosus*, Bronze Cuckoo.—Quite a number of these were seen in the hilly country. They had congregated in small flocks of about 12 birds, and were feeding among the upper branches of the taller trees. They were calling incessantly, and were moving short distances from tree-top to tree-top by a peculiar gliding flight, quite different from the former species.
  15. *Hirundo neoxena*, Welcome Swallow.—These cosmopolitan birds were noticed almost every day, and several nests seen.
  16. *Hylochelidon nigricans*, Tree Martin.—Very common; and were nesting in hollows of large trees. Generally several pairs in one tree.
  17. *Petroica multicolor*, Western Scarlet-breasted Robin.—Plentiful in the hills. A few nests found; each containing young.
  18. *Melanodryas bicolor*, Hooded Robin.—One pair noticed at Barton, on the East-West Railway.

19. *Smicrornis brevirostris*, Short-billed Tree-Tit.—Very few of these birds were noticed. I only remember seeing them in the saplings at Mundaring.
20. *Gerygone fusca*, Southern Fly-eater.—A very common bird, observed in all districts. Its presence was always made known by the very pleasing and sustained song, and it could be distinguished at once from the *Acanthiza*, with which it was usually associated, by the excessive white on the tail, which is very conspicuous when flying.
21. *Eopsaltria griseogularis*, Grey-breasted Shrike-Robin.—I was very pleased to see these birds, which were thinly scattered over all the country from Mundaring to Pemberton, this being the first time that I have seen the birds alive, and, although I spent some time in listening for the call, they made no sound; evidently this species is very quiet.
22. *Oreoica gutturalis*, Crested Bell-Bird.—A few pairs noted at Kellerberrin and Kalgoorlie.
23. *Pachycephala pectoralis*, Western Whistler.—These were thinly dispersed through the hills.
24. *Rhipidura flabellifera*, Western Fantail.—Very common birds. They are much more plentiful than are their allied species in South Australia.
25. *Rhipidura leucophrys*, Black-and-white Fantail.—Fairly plentiful, but is not so often met with as in South Australia.
26. *Graucalus novae-hollandiae*, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.—A few seen at Pemberton.
27. *Campephaga tricolor*, White-shouldered Caterpillar-eater.—Many pairs were noisily occupying the trees in the township of Kellerberrin.
28. *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, White-browed Babbler.—These were fairly common birds in all the parts visited, and many of their coarse stick nests were noticed.
29. *Cincloramphus cruralis*, Brown Song-Lark.—Seen in the open country.
30. *Cincloramphus mathewsi*, Rufous Song-Lark.—Several examples of this species were noticed. One's attention is usually called to them by their loud notes.
31. *Epthianura albifrons*, White-fronted Bush-Chat.—Were noticed nesting in company with Tricoloured Chat at Kalgoorlie.

32. *Epthianura tricolor*, Crimson Chat.—One nest of this species was found in a low bush at Kalgoorlie; it contained four heavily-incubated eggs.
33. *Acanthiza inornata*, Western Tit-Warbler.—These birds were very common at Kellerberrin, also the other districts visited further south. They spend most of their time feeding either in the low bushes or on the ground. A few nests were found which were either being built or contained young birds. A favourite nesting site is in the head of grasstrees, but one nest with young birds was in a mistletoe quite 20 feet from the ground.
34. *Acanthiza chrysorrhoea*, Yellow-tailed Tit-Warbler.—Were quite as plentiful as in South Australia.
35. *Acanthiza uropygialis*, Chestnut-rumped Tit-Warbler.—Only noticed at Kellerberrin.
36. *Acanthiza apicalis*, Broad-tailed Tit-Warbler.—A very common species. Several nests were noticed, some with young. One nest contained two eggs of the Tit and one egg of the Fantail Cuckoo. Another nest contained two eggs. The usual clutch appears to be two.
37. *Sericornis maculata*, Spotted Scrub-Wren.—These were very plentiful in the thick bushes in the sandhills at Bunbury. I can detect no difference from specimens collected on the coast of South Australia. At Pemberton, in the gullies, I found a *Sericornis* which differs from the Bunbury birds by being distinctly yellowish underneath, and they correspond exactly with specimens taken in the Mount Lofty Ranges, S.A. I notice by Mathews' "Birds of Australia" that the species of *Sericornis* from Warren River, W.A., which is the same locality in which I secured my examples, has been described as *S. m. warreni*. It is very interesting to note that birds of this species collected from coastal districts in W.A. and in S.A. cannot be separated from one another, and likewise specimens taken from the hills of W.A. and the hills of S.A. cannot be separated. Thus it appears that slight differences in isolated groups of the same species are brought about by a change of environment, and that similar changed environments will produce similar changes of plumage.
38. *Malurus callainus*, Turquoise Wren-Warbler.—One pair of these were seen at Barton, on the East-West Railway.

39. *Malurus splendens*, Banded Wren-Warbler.—Very plentiful in the hills, also noticed in the suburbs of Perth. They were nesting, three eggs being in each nest.
40. *Malurus leuconotus*, White-winged Wren-Warbler.—Only noticed at Kalgoorlie.
41. *Artamus cyanopterus*, Wood-Swallow.—Made their appearance suddenly at Pemberton, and two days later were building their nests.
42. *Colluricincla rufiventris*, Shrike-Thrush.—A very common bird.
43. *Grallina cyanoleuca*, Magpie-Lark.—Several pairs were seen. One nest at Kellerberrin contained four large young. The mud nest was built on a slim horizontal bough of a Gimlet-tree.
44. *Aphelocephala leucopsis*, White Face.—Seen at Barton, Kalgoorlie, and Kellerberrin.
45. *Neositta pileata*, Black-capped Tree-runner.—Several small lots of these sprightly birds noticed.
46. *Climacteris rufa*, Rufous Tree-Creeper.—Nowhere very plentiful, but odd pairs seen in all localities south of Mundaring.
47. *Zosterops gouldi*, Grey-backed Silver-eye.—Very common, especially in the sandhills at Bunbury. They have just as bad a reputation as fruit destroyers as the *dorsalis* in S.A. Several nests were found, which either contained two eggs or two young.
48. *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*, Mistletoe-Bird.—One pair only observed at Bunbury.
49. *Pardalotus striatus*, Red-tipped Pardalote.—Numerous wherever there was large timber.
50. *Melithreptus chloropsis*, Western White-naped Honey-eater.—Fairly plentiful in the hills. Cabinet specimens of these cannot be picked out from *M. lunulatus* after the colour has gone from the naked skin around the eye; but when fresh the difference is very marked. The skin about eye of *M. lunulatus* is bright red, but in *M. chloropsis* it is a dead white.
51. *Acanthorhynchus superciliosus*, White-browed Spinebill.—There were more of these Honey-eaters seen than of any other species. They were nesting, and the site usually chosen was in a dense shrubby tree, the nest being about six or eight feet from the ground, although I remember a nest found about six years ago which was in a Redgum and about 30 feet from the ground. One

- nest observed contained two young, and another two eggs.
52. *Glyciophila melanops*, Tawny-crowned Honey-eater.—Were only seen at Kellerberrin, and very few there.
53. *Glyciophila albifrons*, White-fronted Honey-eater.—A few birds observed at Kalgoorlie.
54. *Stigmatops indistincta*, Brown Honey-eater.—Thinly dispersed; nowhere were they noticed in numbers.
55. *Meliphaga ornata*, Yellow-plumed Honey-eater.—This species was noticed feeding in the blossoming trees at Bunbury.
56. *Meliphaga plumula*, Yellow-fronted Honey-eater.—A few odd birds noticed at Kalgoorlie; one specimen was secured for identification.
57. *Meliornis novae-hollandiae*, Long-billed Honey-eater.—On comparing W.A. specimens with those from S.A. there does not appear to be any appreciable difference. In fact, on comparing about a dozen skins, the bills of the S.A. forms in most cases were longer than in W.A. forms.
58. *Myzantha obscura*, Dusky Miner.—Plentiful on the flat country around Kellerberrin, but were not noticed anywhere in the hills.
59. *Anthochaera carunculata*, Red Wattle-Bird.—The gums about Bunbury were blossoming freely, and these Wattle-Birds were fairly common, feeding among the blossoms.
60. *Anthus australis*, Australian Pipit.—Of course, these birds were met with in the open country. What a wonderful range they have! No part of Australia is without its quota of "Larks."
61. *Zonaequithus ocellatus*, Red-eared Finch.—Only one bird of this species was noticed. That was feeding on the side of the roadway in the centre of Bridgetown.
62. *Corvus bennetti*, Short-billed Crow.—In great numbers in the country midway between Port Augusta and Kalgoorlie. Although no specimen was taken, they were undoubtedly of this species.
63. *Strepera plumbea*, Leaden Bell-Magpie.—These large birds were often met, especially in the Karri country.
64. *Cracticus torquatus*, White-winged Butcher-Bird.—These birds are thinly dispersed; and were observed in all localities. Two nests were seen at Kellerberrin, one containing three young, and the other three eggs.

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165. *Gymnorhina dorsalis*, Varied Magpie.—Were plentiful everywhere. This is undoubtedly a very baffling species. I wished to secure a pair for my collection, and, noticing that about half the birds were white-backed and half black-backed, thought there would be no trouble. The first specimen secured was a mature bird with back white with just a few flecks of black, and proved, as expected, to be a male. Then, selecting a very black-backed bird, I expected to have a female, but it proved to be a young bird, the bill not yet being white at the base, and the feathers of the body were edged with grey. This bird was also a male. Then at Bunbury I again essayed to secure a female, and, choosing a very black-backed bird with the underfeathers of the body glossy and the bill whitish at the base, I was surprised to again find it a male bird. This last specimen was certainly not a young bird, and had been breeding. So that it appears that all young of both sexes have black backs, and it is at least more than one season before the male gets the white back.

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