

Unusual and Rare Birds seen at "Wetunga" during the Autumn and Winter, 1924.

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During the autumn we had some very rough weather, and following one or two severe blows Giant Petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*) and Prions (*Pachyptila desolata*) were driven inland. The former birds were picked up in an exhausted condition, but alive. The writer kept one of these large birds for a considerable time by feeding it upon fish and meat till it had recovered, when it was liberated on the beach. There were several others picked up from half a mile to a mile inland. The Prions, which were of both varieties (narrow and broad billed birds) when found were all dead. Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) were also swept up on the beach and died.

The writer has never seen so many White-cheeked Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*). They visited the plains in great numbers this autumn and early winter, and many are still with us. Lots of from 15 to 20 were often flushed from the ground where they were feeding amongst the thistles. I also flushed them from amongst the dry stinkweed, and believe they were searching on the ground for the seed shed by this plant. Every year this bird seems to come north from its habitat in the southern part of this State, but this year it has come in greater numbers than ever before.

Adelaide Rosellas (*Platycercus adelaidensis*) were also in evidence, and one fine bird was the brightest of this species I have ever seen. It must have been a very old male which had wandered up from the most southerly end of the Mount Lofty Ranges. They have all left us now (26th July).

For many years the Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*) disappeared from the Adelaide Plains, although it was very plentiful here at the Reedbeds in years gone by. This year several small parties have put in an appearance, and it has been very pleasing to the writer to see them back in their old haunts again. As a boy I have seen the Red-backed Parrot, or, as we knew them then as, the "Grass-Parrot," nesting in the big Guntrees within a few yards of the house. The writer feels sure that the imported Starling was the cause of the Parrots disappearing.

A pair of Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) nested in the district last season, and this year several small parties of a dozen or more have been constantly about, and their well-known call is heard every evening as they come to the big Gums to roost.

Amongst the unusual visitors the most important is the Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*). This is the first time I have seen this bird at the Reedbeds, and his well-known ringing call associated with our Australian bush gave me quite a start when first hearing it. There seemed to be but one bird, a fine male. The small birds, knowing him to be a menace to them, mobbed him wherever he went. At the present time (26th July) the bird is still here.

Another casual visitor (always in the autumn) is the Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*). The first bird put in its appearance on 20th May, spent a whole day in the creepers along the verandah, and had a great time chasing flies which had been attracted by the warm sunlight on the north side of the house. Before the spring these birds left us, although 30 years ago I have seen them nesting in the Teatree on the banks of the Patawalonga Creek.

For the first time for several years the fascinating call of the Curlew, or Southern Stoneplover (*Burhinus magirostris*), was heard on 7th July. These birds were once very plentiful in the district, and I have known of 10 pairs nesting in the one season. Population and the fox have nearly wiped them out. In fact, they are gone from the district, and those recently heard are but visitors.

Another bird which came to us, often in numbers, each autumn, but had not been seen for the last twelve years, is the Bustard (*Eupodotis australis*). One bird put in its appearance in June.

Having had a large sheet of water on the property all through the summer the writer has been successful in keeping a great number of birds from molestation, including great numbers of Duck of several species, mostly Grey Teal. A beautiful White Egret paid my sanctuary a visit, and the stately ways and glorious plumage of this fine bird pleased me beyond measure.

Amongst the many species of birds which have frequented the writer's extensive swamps are Red-kneed Dotterel (*Erythrogonys cinctus*), Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*), both Spur-winged and Banded Plover, White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*), Banded Stilt (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*), the beautiful little Red-necked Stint (*Pisobia ruficollis*), and Sharp-tailed Stint (*P. acuminata*) have been in the shallow marshes in thousands. Australian Painted Snipe (*Rostratula australis*) have been plentiful this season, and I shall soon hear their deep booming note as nesting-time comes along. White-faced Heron, or "Blue Crane," in numbers, White-necked Heron

(*Notophox pacifica*), Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*), Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), Ducks have been coming and going all the time. Amongst them were noted Grey Teal (*Virago gibberifrons*) in great numbers, Chestnut Teal (*V. castanea*), Grey (commonly called Black) Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), they are pairing off now for nesting, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck (Mountain Duck) (*Tadorna tadornoides*), Blue-winged Shoveller (*Spatula rhynchotis*), Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*), Australian White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*).

The writer spent several evenings crouching in a shelter out of sight (without a gun) listening to the bird calls, and the time spent was a delightful one, identifying species after species by their call or flight.

Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*) has not been very plentiful this year. The writer saw several at Tailem Bend on 10th June.

The Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) is late on the plains this year. First seen 13th July; only an odd one calling here; and there and not for long.

Fantail Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*). Many birds about, but very silent.

Magpies are looking out their nesting sites and male birds fighting fiercely.

Brush Wattle-Birds (*Creedion chrysoptera*) are very noisy this month, fighting all other birds; a sure sign of nesting.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) are very busy building now. They are pulling the coconut fibre out of the mats to bind the mud.

During the midday hour of a sultry day in the past autumn, insect life was on the wing, mostly flying ants. Great numbers of birds were hawking, some 30 or 40 feet up over the house. Amongst them were quite fifty Silver Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae*). It was a strange sight to see the Gulls capturing such small insects on the wing.

The first pair of Gray (Black) Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) to seek their nest were observed on 4th July, amidst the undergrowth on the river bank.

Black Moorhens (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) are calling loudly in their harsh cry along the river, and it is to be hoped they will nest again this season, as they did the previous year.

The Noisy Miners (*Myzantha melanocephala*) which have established themselves in very recent years at the Reedbeds are still holding their own, and keep up a chatter all day long. It is wonderful how very local these birds are.

The foregoing species are only those which call for special comment, and are quite apart from the many resident species.