

Notes on the Distribution of Four Species of South Australian Birds.

By Dr. A. M. Morgan.

Between 11th and 13th of March of this year I had occasion to make a trip to Renmark and back. Although the trip was not undertaken for ornithological reasons, some observations of interest were made regarding four species of birds. The itinerary was Adelaide to Blanchetown (via Truro) to Waikerie, Berri, and Renmark, returning via Berri, Kingston, Blanchetown, and Sedan. The first point of interest was the distribution of the two species of Magpies, *Gymnorhina tibicen* (Black-backed Magpie) and *G. hypoleuca* (White-backed Magpie). Up to Blanchetown *G. hypoleuca* alone was seen; after crossing the River Murray a single individual of the same species was met with near the River, but from there onwards and returning to Blanchetown only *G. tibicen*, the Black-backed species, was met with. There is no obvious reason why these birds should be separated, for there is little or no difference in the class of country on either side of the River. A few hundred yards of water would present no obstacle to birds of such powerful flight. On several trips from Morgan to Renmark by motor I have found on every occasion that the White-backed Magpie is found until about twelve miles east of Morgan, when the Black-backed takes

its place on both sides of the River to at least as far as Mildura, which is the limit of my observations. At Laura, 140 miles north of Adelaide, where I lived for three years, both species were present, the White-backed being much more common than the Black-backed. In journeying by train on the main north line I have always found that the first Black-backed birds are seen in the neighbourhood of Quorn. At Port Augusta both species are present, probably in about equal numbers, but at Mount Gunson, 105 miles north-west of Port Augusta, the Black-backs alone are to be found. On the other hand, at Kallioota, on the Willochra Creek, fifty-two miles north of Port Augusta, I saw none but White-backs, which were breeding freely at the time of my visit. In a trip by car from Port Augusta to Port Broughton on the west side of the Flinders Ranges, Black-backs were seen as far south as Port Germein; south of that none but White-backs were seen. In no instance have I noticed any change in the class of country to account for the limitation of the Black-backed species. On two occasions I have seen the Black-backed species near Adelaide; once in the hills, and once on the plains. On each occasion the bird was in company with White-backs, and appeared to be quite at home; so there seems to be no reason why they should not spread over the southern parts of the State, yet in the thirty years that I have been observing them they do not appear to have enlarged their habitat.

Another species met with on the Renmark trip was the White-browed Tree-Creeper (*Climacteris affinis*). It was first seen between Truro and Blanchetown, thence onwards to Renmark, and on the return journey as far as Sedan, a considerable enlargement of its hitherto-known range.

Between Kingston and Blanchetown in thick mallee scrub a Whistler flew across in front of the car, and I feel sure it was *Pachycephala rufogularis* (Red-throated Whistler), but as it has not previously been seen in that locality I hesitate to make a definite record without a specimen, but would ask anyone working in that district to keep a look out for it.