

Historical Series No 77.

Mathew Symonds Clark (1839 - 1920)

Part 3 by Penny Paton

Other bird species mentioned in the diaries

It is regrettable that Symonds Clark did not publish even a list of all the birds he recorded from Hazelwood, which would have complemented Crompton's (1915) paper on the species he and his brothers had seen at nearby Stonyfell over the period from about 1880 to 1915. I have produced a table of the species Clark reported from Hazelwood or nearby suburbs from his diaries, taken from Sutton's transcription of five diaries and from my notes from the other four diaries in the SLSA (Table 1). This table is not a comprehensive list and seems to be missing bird species that I would have expected to be present in the Burnside area at the time Clark lived there. However, although Clark did own a pair of binoculars, he was often without them when he was observing birds and he does not seem to have been a topnotch bird observer of the calibre of his good friend, Robert Crompton, or the likes of Captain S.A. White. In particular he seems to have missed some small bird species like White-fronted Chat and Fairy Martin, described as "very common" and "fairly common" respectively at Stonyfell by Crompton (1915). The parrot tribe is excluded from the notes as they have been covered in the in Part 2.

Many bird species absent from Table 1 were recorded by Crompton (1915). It is impossible to tell whether Clark missed these species or whether they did not occur at Hazelwood. Species that Crompton recorded as common or fairly common and which Clark could have observed were Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Painted Quail, Peaceful Dove, Masked Lapwing, Australasian Bittern, Cape Barren Goose, Pacific Black Duck, Great Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Spotted Harrier, Black Kite, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon, Tawny Frogmouth, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, Shining Bronze Cuckoo, Fairy Martin, Jacky Winter, Hooded Robin, Rufous Whistler, White-browed Babbler, Brown Songlark, White-fronted Chat, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Crescent

Honeyeater, Common Starling, Common Blackbird, European Goldfinch and European Greenfinch.

Some species were seen rarely or only once by Crompton (1915), like the Silver Gull, Red-backed Kingfisher and Australian Reed Warbler and yet others were rarely recorded, like the Diamond Firetail. So it is not surprising that Clark did not record these rare species. However for the Australian Golden Whistler, a brightly-coloured bird with a very distinctive and loud call, which admittedly Crompton (1915) described as "Not at all common", Clark said, when he saw it on Kangaroo Island in 1887, that it was the first time he had encountered this species. And this was despite numerous trips into the MLR in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.

Symonds Clark described trips to various parts of Australia and especially South Australia in his diaries. For example he visited Macclesfield in



Tawny Frogmouth
photographed by Lynton Huxley
in Shepherds' Hill RP on 19/08/2021



White-fronted Chat

(Image by Ann Houghton and used courtesy of the photographer and the Birds SA website photographic gallery)

March 1860 and on other occasions, the Reedbeds property of William White in January 1869, the Onkaparinga River on several occasions; Port Elliot, Port Victor [Victor Harbor] and Goolwa in the early 1870s, the Murray River via Eudunda in 1892, Port Lincoln and surrounds in 1895, Mt Torrens and Balhannah in 1897 and the National Park at Belair in 1910. He also spent several days on at least two occasions (1867 and 1869) staying at Dr Kelly's at McLaren Vale. Dr Kelly was a winemaker as well as a medical doctor and in the 1860s William Lennox Cleland spent a number of years learning the art of wine-making from him at his winery 'Tintara'. Cleland and Clark spent time together observing and collecting birds near McLaren Vale in February 1867.

Of particular interest to ornithologists is Clark's record of a Spotted Quailthrush shot by JC (presumably John Crompton) near Kangarilla on 25th June 1867; this species is now believed to be extinct in the Mount Lofty Ranges, as there have been no sightings for about 35 years.

From 1877 there are many diary entries related to staying at Port Willunga, where Joseph Crompton and Symonds both owned land from 1882. The Martin family bought an old stone, slate-roofed cottage there also in 1882 and it was used for holidays by the extended family (Dowie 1999). Symond's brother, John Howard Clark, also had a house at Port Willunga, where he may have

spent his last years and where he died of tuberculosis on 20th May 1878 (www 7).

I was perplexed on reading two accounts of waterbirds in relation to a bath that was outside the Hazelwood home until I read in Warburton (1981) that Henry Clark (Symonds' brother and farm manager until 1858) had constructed a change room and a swimming bath for his nieces and nephews. The first of these references related to 28th July 1866, when Symonds Clark saw a White-breasted Cormorant [a pied cormorant but identity unsure] flying over and "A.S.C. [Algernon Sidney Clark] told me that it went down to the bath and that he saw it sitting on the edge of the bath. I believe I had only once before seen one of these birds at Hazelwood." Another diary entry referred to a heron near the bath.



Australasian Bittern

(Image by Kevin Williams and used courtesy of the photographer and the Birds SA website photographic gallery)

The Historical Series on Mathew Symonds Clark will conclude with Part 4 in the next issue of The Birder.

Table 1. Bird species from Hazelwood and surrounding suburbs reported by Symonds Clark, 1862-1916.

Bird species	Notes
teal species	Most likely to be Grey Teal (recorded by Crompton 1915)
Black Swan	Fly over day and night quite often
Australian Owlet-nightjar	In February 1869 recorded hearing the call many times at night
Pallid Cuckoo	ca. 9/1888 – 1 shot at Kensington Park
Common Bronzewing	Occasional wild bird coming to aviary birds
Buff-banded Rail	Single birds in the garden, all 1860s records
Black-tailed Native-hen	18/11/1872 – 1 on Tusmore Road
Bush Stonecurlew	Several in 1860s; 17/2/1867 - juvenile at Chambers Ck; Sep 1895 – Robert Crompton reported tame bird sitting on eggs, Stonyfell
Banded Lapwing	26/5/1863 - heard
Little Black Cormorant	28/8/1892 – 1 shot by Robert Crompton at Stonyfell, in fish tank
Great Egret	17/3/1884 – 1 shot opposite Orphanage Paddock
White-faced Heron	Usually single birds in the 1860s through to 1890
Nankeen Night Heron	10/12/1876 – bird; 13/1/1880 – 3 birds
Australian Pelican	22/9/1864 – flock flying over Adelaide
Collared Sparrowhawk	12/1892 – 1 shot at Norwood
Brown Goshawk	At aviary occasionally and birds shot 1869 and 1894
Wedge-tailed Eagle	24/5/1864 – 1 flying over
Whistling Kite	23/5/1866 – caught by Mr Austin near Stonyfell
Eastern Barn Owl	Several records – heard and seen
Australian Boobook	Numerous records – heard and seen
Azure Kingfisher	23/5/1876 – 1 bird; 5/9/1863 – possible sighting
Laughing Kookaburra	Several records, all from 1860s
Sacred Kingfisher	6/1/1890 – 1 shot Hazelwood; 26/04/1904 – 1 caught Knightsbridge
Rainbow Bee-eater	24/10/1875 – 1 on telegraph lines, East Parklands
Nankeen Kestrel	23/9/1869 – 1 shot near Hazelwood
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
Galah	
Cockatiel	
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	
Musk Lorikeet	
Swift Parrot	
Budgerigar	
Neophema species	
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	
Little Lorikeet	
Adelaide Rosella	
Red-rumped Parrot	
Rainbow Lorikeet	
Brown Treecreeper	11/1868 – 1 caught, possibly at Hazelwood
White-throated Treecreeper	25/6/1863 – some in Chambers Ck. gully
Superb Fairywren	29/8/1863 – 1 Kensington; single birds 1867 and 1868 garden
Eastern Spinebill	1860s records from Stonyfell and Chambers Ck. gully
Red Wattlebird	A few to many, with 25 shot eating fruit on 5/1/1870
Little Wattlebird	22/6/1875 – a good many
Regent Honeyeater	16/4/1863 – 2 females shot; 19/5/1864 – 2 or 3; 13/7/1870 – 1
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	21/6/1864 – 1 shot Stonyfell; 4/2/1872 – damaging grapes this year
Orange Chat	Jan 1869 – Mr F.G. Waterhouse (of SA Institute Museum) says at Magill
Noisy Miner	20/5/1863 – several possible miners between Hazelwood and Mitcham; 18/5/1863 - 1
Black-chinned Honeyeater	In the table of Volume 1 of the diaries but no notes; his identification of melthreptids was uncertain
White-naped Honeyeater	Quite a few records; this appears to have been the most common melithreptid

Table 1 (cont.)

Bird Species	Notes
New Holland Honeyeater	Quite a few records
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	Early Aug 1875 – 2 birds, probably this species
White-plumed Honeyeater	Quite a few records and young one caught May 1874
Spotted Pardalote	22/6/1864 – 1 at Stonyfell; 28/10/1860 – probably nest in gravel pit
Striated Pardalote	Quite a few records
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Many records; 23/2/1863 – many birds; 15/7/1866 – 2 nests Tusmore Road
Dusky Woodswallow	Quite a few records, more from 1860s; 21/7/1863 – 1 st for season
Masked Woodswallow	First seen near Adelaide at Enfield, October 1875; also at Hazelwood in other years
White-browed Woodswallow	First seen near Adelaide at Enfield, October 1875; also at Hazelwood in other years; 2/10/1898 - at Hazelwood, but not seen for ca. 20 years
Grey Butcherbird	18/3/1863 - several
Australian Magpie	Rarely mentioned but this may have been due to its commonness
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Several records from 1868 (many in May), 1872 and 1890
Crested Shriketit	Heard in 1863, 1866 and a young one with an adult on 15/11/1868
Grey Fantail	First sighting in May 1863
Willie Wagtail	Nesting November 1873 at Hazelwood and September 1863 at Knightsbridge
Magpielark	Recorded in the 1860s and 1870s then 20 birds together in May 1888 and a “good many” in March 1889 suggesting increasing abundance
Little Raven	Presumably this species (called crows by Clark), a “good many” in the Parklands in November 1863, and at Hazelwood a “great many” in January 1863 and eating apricots in February 1873
Scarlet Robin	At Stonyfell a nest in sheoak August 1863 and a pair shot in May 1864
Red-capped Robin	11/10/1868 – a bird on Tusmore Road, the first for many years and one bird in same place a week later
Flame Robin	1 caught by cat in May 1874 and 1 found dead in South Kensington in April 1901
Welcome Swallow	Seen at Hazelwood in 1863 and in June 1864 – “some but not nearly so many as previously”
Tree Martin	A good many at Hazelwood in August 1863 and in June 1864 – “some but not nearly so many as previously”; a dead one in August 1869
Silvereye	1 shot at Hazelwood 30/5/1860 and a great many in the garden at Stonyfell in March 1863
Mistletoebird	1 on Greenhill Road in October 1864 and at Hazelwood, 1 in October 1866, 1 in July 1868, 1 in April 1869, 1 in May 1869 and 2 in the vines in February 1872
*House Sparrow	September 1868 – Clark believed that there were many at Mt Gambier and near Melbourne; December 1873 – 100s in Mt Gambier; September 1868 – Mr Slape had birds nesting at Magill “the first instance I have heard of these birds being acclimatised (in a wild state) in the neighbourhood of Adelaide”; 1874 – numbers at Norwood; 28/10/1875 – 2 birds near Hazelwood (previously not seen any closer than at Mrs Ferguson’s a mile away)
Red-browed Finch	1 shot in Second Creek on 14/7/1860; 1 bird in Second Gully Creek on 20/9/1863 and 2 on 14/5/1864; at Hazelwood some “close to house” on 11/7/1869 (not seen often on the Adelaide Plains) and many on 30/3/1873
Zebra Finch	1 at Stonyfell on 10/1/1869
Australian Pipit	10/11/1867 nest with 3 eggs