

**Bird Notes.**

By Dr. A. M. Morgan.

Near Sellick's Beach, 1/9/29, a flock of about 20 Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*) were seen in stinkwort in a paddock. A specimen—♂, total length, 22.6 cm.; spread, 32 cm.; iris dark brown; bill, upper dark horn, lower light horn; legs and feet dark leaden grey.

At Buckland Park, Two Wells, 9/10/29, a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) was seen with nine ducklings; a young Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) out of the nest; a Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) and a Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) were nesting in the same tree, and there were three eggs in the Wagtail's nest; a Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*) was seen.

In the North Park Lands during the week ending 8th November a ♂ and ♀ White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*) were seen.

At Mannum, 27/10/29, the following species were noted:—Coot (*Fulica atra*) in thousands; Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*); Bald Coot (*Porphyrio melanotus*); Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*), from 300 to 400; Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), one only; Little Pied Cormorant (*Microcarbo melonoleucus*), many; Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), one; Marsh Tern (*Chlidonias leucopareia*), about 100; Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*); White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*); White-faced Heron (*Notophox novae-hollandiae*), one; Hardhead or White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*); Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*), one; Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*), several; White-backed Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosterna*); Fairy Martin (*Hylochelidon ariel*), about a dozen; White-plumed Honey-eater (*Meliphaga penicillata*); and Noisy Miner (*Myzantha melanocephala*). No migratory Waders, Plovers, Spoonbills, Egrets, or Whistling Eagles were seen. The Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*) was seen halfway between Mannum and Palmer. Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—A bird was seen on the road near Millbrook, one near Mannum, one near Kinchinda, and one near Blakiston.

At Meadows Creek, 8/12/29, nests were found of Willie Wagtail, building; Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*), nest with two eggs; Red-browed Finch (*Aegintha temporalis*), a new nest, not climbed to.

At Adelaide, during November and December, White-browed Wood-Swallows (*Artamus superciliosus*), three nests were found—one was subsequently deserted; one near the University Oval had two eggs, which were duly hatched out; in the third nest two young were hatched out and left the nest on 11/12/29. When the young were quite big and in the nest the parent birds would dart down at anyone approaching. It was noted during the building of the nests that the sticks forming the outside of the nests were broken off trees, not picked up from the ground.

By Edwin Ashby.

10/9/29.

Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*). — At Blackwood, a bird, presumably a male, was seen in the garden in the morning.

17/9/29.

Bare-eyed Cockatoo (*Kakatoe sanguinea*).—A flock of twelve in number flew over in the afternoon. They were not *galerita* (White Cockatoo), and had some reddish on the face.

22/11/29.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—This species has been in scores for over a week in a grazing paddock of some 14 acres planted with clover. A bird was shot in order to ascertain what it was feeding upon. Twenty caterpillars were found in the stomach, and the herbage is being attacked by those caterpillars. As the Starlings have been seen flying away with their beaks filled, evidently for the young, the birds are doing immense work for the pastoralists in this district.

Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*).—A male bird was noticed in the garden on 21st instant. The species is an unusual visitor to Blackwood.

White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*).—A male has been seen and heard about the place for the past two or three days. This species is not a regular visitor.

By E. F. Boehm.

Sutherlands, 20/8/29 to 18/10/29.

A Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*) was seen near Sutherlands during the first week of September. It flew up from the base of a mallee and settled again after flying only a few chains, and squatted flat on the ground, presenting the appearance of a lizard rather than that of a bird. On the same day a pair of Shy Ground-Wrens (*Hylacola cauta*) was kept under observation for over half an hour. They were exploring the undergrowth of the scrub, and permitted me to approach within a few feet of them. Several times one bird jumped over a foot off the ground to catch a passing insect, and then gave it to its mate. A Crested Bellbird (*Oreoica cristata*) was seen feeding on termites (or white ants) at a place where a mallee stump had just been grubbed out. A family of Purple-backed Wrens (*Malurus assimilis*) and a female Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*) also took part in the feast. I imitated the call of a Bellbird, and received an answering call from an

apparently distant bird. Judge of my surprise when I discovered that the "distant" notes came from the bird under observation, not more than ten feet away. He continued answering my calls, and at length his inquisitiveness impelled him to come within a yard of me. A number of Common Bronzewings (*Phaps chalcoptera*) was seen in a thick scrub composed of mallee shoots and *Geijera*. They were feeding on the seeds of the latter. Bronzewings are also fond of the fruits of the Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena*) and the Wild Cherry (*Exocarpus*). The seeds of several species of Acacia, notably *Acacia oswaldii*, also provide food. I have occasionally seen some of the birds beneath Bullock-bushes (*Heterodendron*); presumably they eat the fallen seeds. Two Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*) were seen on the railway-line between Sutherlands and Deep Creek. They were feeding on the seeds of Barley-grass (*Hordeum*), Speargrass (*Stipa*), and *Zygo-phyllyum*. Many White-winged Trillers (*Lalage tricolor*) have been seen during the past two months, but Cuckoos appear to be rare this season. A few Pallid Cuckoos (*Cuculus pallidus*) are the only *Cuculidae* that have been definitely identified. Many Honeyeaters were seen along the Saltwater Creek recently. They were getting nectar and insects from the flowering eucalypti on the banks of the creek. Several Diamond Firetails (*Zonaeginthus guttatus*) were seen in a clump of Teatrees (*Melaleuca pubescens*), and a few Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*) and Singing Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga virescens*) were exploring some native Boxthorns (*Lycium australe*) near a small waterfall. Black-fronted Dotterels (*Charadrius melanops*) were running about in the shallow water among the reeds, and a chick was seen crouching against the bank of the creek near the water. Its parents did the "wounded-bird" trick while I was in the neighbourhood. A few solitary Nankeen Kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) have been noted. Their food consists almost entirely of small lizards and beetles at present, as other food is scarce, owing to the dry season. The Copper-tailed Skink (*Himula taeniolata*), Snake-eyed Skink (*Ablepharus boutonii*), and the smaller Dragons (*Amphibolurus*) constitute the chief articles of diet, though a fair number of reddish brown Dung Beetles are also eaten. Occasionally a Nankeen Kestrel will take a chicken, but I think this is more than balanced by the good services of the species during seasons when mice are numerous. I have known a pair of Nankeen Kestrels to rear their young within a stone's-throw of a shed where about 70 domestic Pigeons were breeding, and never on any occasion did the Kestrels interfere with the

Pigeons.. Some weeks ago, while walking along a gully which leads across an open paddock, I saw a family of Blue-and-White Wrens (*Malurus cyanotus*) among some native boxthorns and *Acacia collettioides*. I followed the birds for a while, but they soon became aware of my presence, and flew up into a large spreading *Acacia oswaldii*, and refused to be flushed from it. The Purple-backed Wrens (*M. assimilis*) inhabit the neighbouring scrub, but they rarely venture into the open, which is the territory of the Blue-and-White Wrens. While working some thick scrub one early morning, I heard many Chestnut Quail-Thrushes (*Cinclosoma castanotum*) and a few Southern Scrub-Robins (*Drymodes brunneopygia*) calling. The Scrub-Robin will sit on top of a *Geijera* or on a mallee-bough and give vent to its feelings with a far-reaching "Chip-ip-pee" or "Chip-pee." By imitating these calls I have sometimes induced the bird to come within a few feet of me. The Chestnut Quail-Thrush is not so confiding. The usual call of this bird is a plaintive piping whistle which sounds like "Pee-pee-pee-pee-pee-pee," but when perched on a bough or bush they have a different call, which I find impossible to write phonetically. A Black-winged Currawong (*Strepera melanoptera*) was noted near Sutherlands, and a few Crimson Chats (*Epthianura tricolor*) have been seen in several parts of the district. Red-tailed Thornbills (*Acanthiza hamiltoni*) and Gilbert Whistlers (*Pachycephala inornata*) were seen twelve miles north-east of Sutherlands. Both birds are fine singers. At the same place I saw several Rufous Whistlers (*P. rufiventris*) and a few White-eared Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga leucotis*). The White-browed Babblers (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) and the Chestnut-crowned (*P. ruficeps*) were also seen. The Masked Wood-Swallows (*Artamus personatus*) are very numerous at present, and the Red-backed Kingfisher (*Halcyon pyrrhopygius*) and a few Rainbow-Birds (*Merops ornatus*) have been noted during the week.

25/11/29.

The recent rain has revived some of the fodder plants, but much more is required to have a marked effect on the country. The comparatively small number of birds I have noted nesting here this season is a striking feature, and I cannot do otherwise than blame the drought for the state of affairs.

By Rev. Philip P. Darke.

Quorn, 30/9/29.

: At the homestead dam at Mutooroo a few weeks ago I saw an Orange Chat (*Epthianura aurifrons*); ♂, ♀, White-winged

Triller (*Lalage tricolor*); and a number of Crimson Chats (*Epthianura tricolor*). At a dam west of Cockburn I noted some Maned Geese (*Chenonetta jubata*).

By W. J. Harvey.

10/9/29.

Owing to the depredations of the Emus on the crops, I had to take drastic steps, and on 16th August I came on an adult and four one-year-old birds, and after a long chase I secured one bird, a female, and apparently an adult, although not breeding. The weight was 68 lb.; length, toe to bill 74 in., tail to bill 52½ in.; but as some of the tail feathers were pulled out in the chase it may have been longer. The nail of the middle toe on the right foot was missing, but this appeared to cause no loss of speed. The nail had been lost for some time, as the wound was quite healed, but the extremity of the toe was much broader than the base. On examining the contents of the stomach I found it to be full of the stamens of the broad-leaved banksia. Prior to this discovery I had never suspected that they fed on the banksia.

18/10/29.

The Ravens (*Corvus coronoides*) have as usual been making raids on the fowls' eggs. Sometimes we did not get an egg for days, although for the week we were shearing and about the homestead we averaged over a dozen eggs a day. We managed to shoot several, since when they have given the place a wide berth. They will most likely keep away until the really hot weather arrives and they have to come in for water. They need it then so badly that my brother caught as many as five in an hour by lying under the trough and putting his hand up and catching them by the legs whilst they were drinking. A pair of Grey Butcher-Birds (*Cracticus torquatus*) nested close to the house this season, and as a friend wanted a pair for his garden I took the young ones, but as they could not feed I put them back in the nest, the parents continuing to feed them as before. However, when the young birds showed signs of leaving the nest I took them out and put them in a cage, which I placed in the garden. The parent birds continued to feed the young ones upon pieces of meat that I cut up, pieces of small snakes and lizards, blowflies, cockroaches, and nestlings taken from other birds' nests (these last were generally torn into pieces before being passed to the young). After a fortnight of this feeding—poking the food into the young ones' throats—the parent birds seemed to decide that it was time for the young to forage for themselves, and the food was dropped on the floor of the cage.

The youngsters had a "hunger-strike" for a day, and then picked up the food from the cage-floor. I also noticed that the young ejected pellets from the stomach in the same manner as the Owls. In size these pellets were almost as big as the chrysalis of a silkworm. Previous to this experience I was not sure that the Butcher-Birds killed snakes, but one day I saw one of the parent birds kill a snake about a foot long. The bird held the snake by the head and knocked it against a branch of a tree. A pair of Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*) nested here again this year, laying four eggs, and successfully hatched and reared the lot. The Emus are again troubling us. They have been with us in varying numbers since seeding. One day last week I counted 17 in a crop on a neighbour's place, and on the same day my brother counted 11 on our own crop about three miles away, with a vermin-proof fence and a railway-line in between. Everyone here is complaining about their depredations. On 20th October I caught a large one. Its weight was  $77\frac{1}{2}$  lb.; length, bill to toe  $85\frac{1}{2}$  in., bill to tail  $70\frac{1}{2}$  in. The stomach contents were the flowers of the Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), some oats, and pieces of charcoal. When freshly killed they are very "high," but when left to stand for twenty-four hours, as this one was, well—by the time that I had ascertained the stomach contents I had had more than enough!

#### SOME BIRDS IN THE SCRUB AT STANSBURY, Y.P.

By F. E. Parsons.

Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*).—♂, 6/9/29; total length, 14 in.; spread, 37 in.; iris red, bill black, legs and feet yellow.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—♂, 7/9/29; total length, 11 in.; spread, 24 in.; iris bright yellow; skin round eye yellow; wattles light red; bill light yellow, but grey at upper tip; legs and feet dark grey, with a reddish tinge above the knee; inside mouth grey.

Shy Ground-Wren (*Hylacola cauta*).—♂, 7/9/29; iris brown; bill, legs, and feet black; total length, 5 in.; spread, 7 in. 8/9/29, nest built at the base of a broom-bush, cavity in the ground, and the nest was half below surface of ground, the entrance level with the ground; a domed nest outwardly built of old soft bark, lined very snugly with fur and feathers, many of the latter brightly coloured; three eggs, incubation .5. Bird flushed from nest.

Rufous Field-Wren (*Calamanthus campestris*).—♂, 7/9/29; total length, 5 in.; spread, 7 in.; iris brown, lighter on outer margin. ♂, 7/9/29; total length,  $4\frac{3}{4}$  in.; spread, 7 in.

Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*).—♀, 10/9/29; total length, 4 in.; spread, 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.; iris brown; bill very dark brown; legs and feet brown. ♂, 10/9/29, soft parts, etc., similar to ♀.

By L. R. Reese.

Minnie Downs, via Marree, 1/10/29.

Since I last wrote (26/5/29) we have had 36 points of rain, which count as nil. On the 16th September I noticed the first of the Pallid Cuckoos (*Cuculus pallidus*) to arrive, and on the 29th September the first of the Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) put in an appearance. Birds are scarce in the district at present; in fact, those that are about are the pests.

8/12/29.

No rain having fallen since I last wrote, there is no alteration noticeable in the bird life. Pallid Cuckoo, a few White-winged Trillers (*Lalage tricolor*), and Willie Wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) are still with us. Masked Wood-Swallows (*Artamus personatus*) are numerous, a few Red-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksi*), some Cockatoo Parrots (*Leptolophus hollandicus*), and Galahs in thousands.

By E. A. Brooks.

Buckland Park, Two Wells.

On 3rd and 6th October, 1929, Wood-Swallows (sp. (?) ) were seen flying overhead; on the latter date they were in large numbers, and seemed inclined to settle, as they were flying low.

By H. A. Stevens.

A Marsh-Crake (*Porzana pusilla*) was captured near St. Kilda (now called Moilong) in September, 1929. The bird was released on the River Torrens in the city.

By Dr. W. Hamilton.

At Mudamuckla, 19 miles below Murat Bay, S.A., five Brush Bronzewings (*Phaps elegans*) were captured under some wire-netting at a low-lying spot where water had collected alongside the track and 300 yards from the sea.

By J. Neil McGilp.

On 12th September, 1929, five Bare-eyed Cockatoos (*Kakatoe sanguinea*) were seen flying over King's Park.

On 4th November, 1929, at Moolawatana, near Lake Frome, a nest of the Black-faced Wood-Swallow (*Artamus melanops*) with four eggs was found. There were very few birds about.