

Bird Notes.

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By J. W. Mellor.

January, 1931.—Noted quite a number of Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) in company with Tree-Martins (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) at Lockleys one day this month. The weather was windy and cold, and the birds were congregated on the wire fences, sometimes settling on the ground; ever and anon they would fly off, skim about in the air, and return to the same spot. Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*) have been about the big gums in Mellor Park in twos and threes. Their presence is made known by their "clinking" notes as they fly about the trees. They stay for a short period and then disappear.

February.—Purple-crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*) were here during the month in the flowering blue gums. Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*) were eating the boxthorn berries. White-fronted Chats (*Epthianura albifrons*) were more than usually energetic in seeking the small insects on the ground from which the tomato glass-houses had been removed. A Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) kept hawking in the paddocks about the big red gums, flying swiftly from place to place, whilst the small birds were uttering their alarm calls all the time. The Noisy Miners (*Myzantha melanocephala*) are the chief ones to warn the other birds of the approach of the enemy. European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were very numerous, flying about in thousands and doing great damage

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to the grapes and figs. They not only devoured great quantities, but mutilated many, so that they were useless for consumption.

March.—During this month the Noisy Miners have been busy nesting in various places, generally choosing a situation high up in the old red gums and out on slender branches. Another site is on a horizontal branch of the Norfolk Island pines near the house. I was pleased to see, early in the month, a Rock Pebbler (*Polytelis anthopeplus*) in the big gumtrees. The small birds were greatly agitated at its presence, but soon learned that it was not an enemy. This parrot obtains its food in the trees, and I have never seen it on the ground after seeds.

April.—There have been quite a number of Yellow-winged Honeyeaters (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*) about. They take cover in the boxthorns, sally forth after insects, and also suck the nectar from the flowers of a large bush of the Cape Tecoma. Singing Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga virescens*) are also in the boxthorns and eat its ripe red berries. A few pairs of the Red-backed Parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*) can be flushed in the paddocks. They eat the boxthorn berries as well as grass seeds.

May.—On 6th May I noted the first of the Flame-Robins (*Petroica phoenicea*) for the season. An adult male and a female were flitting about near the ground in the paddocks. Since that date I have noted several here and there seeking for insect food where the grass and herbage were growing strongly after the rains. On 16th May the White-faced Herons (*Notophox novae-hollandiae*) returned. Eight of them came sailing over, uttering their familiar harsh croaking calls; after flying around several times they settled in a fine old red gum in which a brood was reared last year. At first they seemed unsettled, as some of the adjoining trees have been removed since last year, but they have remained. They have a pick at one another if several settle on the same limb. The Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga chrysops*) began to arrive during the last week in April and increased in number this month. They favour the boxthorn bushes and the large Moreton Bay figtrees near the stables. In some wild tobacco trees near the house several Eastern Spinebills (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) were to be seen probing their long needle-like bills into the flowers to secure the nectar. It was interesting to watch them hovering, like a humming bird, beneath a bunch of flowers and thrusting their bills upwards into the blooms while thus poised in mid-air. The White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga*

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penicillata), which seemed to have gone away after the arrival of the Noisy Miners (now very numerous) have returned, and take cover in the boxthorn bushes, where the Grey-backed Silver-eyes (*Zosterops halmaturina*) are also found. A Little Wattle-Bird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*) put in an appearance a few days ago.

June.—Nearly all the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters left by the end of June. White-faced Herons still frequent the old red gumtrees and seem to intend to nest. Flame Robins are still here in the open paddocks. Dusky Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) arrived in the last week of June. They are at present in the back paddocks, and amuse themselves by skimming over the ploughed land catching flies and moths, returning to the low bushes to eat the morsels thus caught, swaying their tails in their characteristic fashion. They rather resent the intrusion of other birds within the area they occupy. Yellow-tailed Thornbills (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) are to be seen in the low boxthorn bushes actively engaged in seeking out insect food.

July.—On the 1st July I saw a White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) picking up soft matting at the back door and carrying it to the nest in a red gumtree close handy. Several pairs have been building nests in the red gumtrees during the month. Noisy Miners have been busy at their nests and attack every bird that comes near them. About the middle of the month I noted a Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) flying in the back paddock, with most of the small birds chasing it and uttering their alarm calls. A pair of White-faced Herons have brought out their young, which are now able to fly. Flame Robins were seen about until the end of the month. A small flock of Rainbow Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) have been feeding on the nectar in the flowering blue gums all this month. A pair of Nankeen Kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) have been near an old gumtree, where they generally breed in a big hollow. The Yellow-faced Honeyeaters all left by the end of the month. I have never found them nesting on the plains. The Dusky Wood-Swallows had left by 30th July. They particularly favoured a nurseryman's garden, where they were protected rigidly, as he knows the worth of these and other insectivorous birds to his nursery. The Wood-Swallows became so tame that they would follow the workmen as they were weeding the seedlings and would settle on the man's hand to eat a grub or caterpillar offered to them.

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By N. Hiles Pearse, The Gums Station, Florieton.

30/6/1931.—The red tecomas have been flowering lately, and they have been just alive with Honeyeaters—Singing (*Meliphaga virescens*), Yellow-plumed (*M. ornata*), White-plumed (*M. penicillata*), Spiny-cheeked (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*), and Noisy Miners (*Myzantha melanocephala*). Yesterday a dozen Babblers (*Pomatostomus* sp.) put in an appearance, hopping about in the *Durantia plumieri* hedge and turning over the litter with their beaks; what busy little chaps they are, and how they brag about it. Community singing goes on daily in the big gumtrees a couple of hundred yards away, the Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*) being there in full force, whirling and turning in the air, and doing gymnastics on the branches and telephone wires. At times they take a turn on the antennae of the wireless. I fear, sometimes, that the thin wire will snap, and on the sloping guide wires they often slip from top to bottom, holding the wire in their beaks. They are most amusing. We had a rare visitor lately. It appeared after a heavy blow off the coast. It is usual at times to roast a dead sheep in the coals in the poultry run, to give the fowls meat, and one morning I was very surprised to see a young Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) feeding quite happily with the fowls. It only stayed with us a few days.

30/7/1931.—I have definitely placed another species which I have seen on rare occasions in this locality—the Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*).

This morning I saw a Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) fly into a corrugated iron tank on a stand which had a cover over it with a manhole. The bird had a feather in its mouth. I climbed to the tank and saw a nearly completed nest under the lid but too far to reach. As I examined it the birds flew around in distress. I have seen the nests of these birds many feet down the side of timbered and rock wells, have seen them leave same, but have not in the past noticed what mode of flight they adopt entering and leaving. I will seize the first opportunity I get to do so.

Willie Wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) have at times nested in the ivy creeper on the verandah, in the summer-house, and even on the rope of the shower in the shearer's bathroom. On one occasion the young birds (2) in the nest in the ivy became so large that I was afraid they would fall out, so with a long hat-pin I fixed another wagtail's discarded nest alongside. However,

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they did not avail themselves of my kindness and the fledgings went on alright. These birds are not naturally timid, but one pair puzzled me. They had a nest with two eggs on the low branch of a figtree. I examined it one day, with the female bird shrieking "kitty kitty" in my ear and making vicious darts at me. When I went next day the remains of the eggs were on the ground, and a few days later the nest had been pulled to pieces. It may have been done by a natural depredator, but if it were done by the birds themselves it was my first experience of the kind, though I have known other species which destroyed their own nests.

Years ago, when I lived at a house three miles from here, a Singing Honeyeater made a nest in a verandah creeper and reared young ones for two consecutive seasons. It became so tame that it would hop into the kitchen and take crumbs off the table. We named it "Peter the Piper." It eventually disappeared.

By L. Reese, Minnie Downs.

Under date of 20th July, 1931, he writes:—It would not surprise me to find the Banded Stilts (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*) nesting on the islands in any of the Coongy Lakes. No person would trouble to plough through bog for a mile or so unless he was really interested. That sort of thing is only done when your food supply gives out and you are looking for eggs to eat. On the 4th instant Mr. Gurr and myself saw about 400 Flock Pigeons (*Histriophaps histrionica*) between Pandborough and Cooncherie, along the edge of the flood waters of what is termed Goyder's Lagoon. I thought these birds had left the district, as the blacks had been living on them for some time, but I have heard there were also a few hundreds on the Herbert, not far from Bert's Waterhole. The country never looked better than it does at present and birds are very plentiful. I have seen an odd Bustard (*Eupodotis australis*). These birds are usually very numerous when we have a good season.

By Dr. A. M. Morgan.

June 13.—A Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*) flew over North Adelaide in the morning.

June 22.—A Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), ♂, was picked up dead at North Adelaide. Iris white; legs and feet black; bill pinkish horn colour, point of maxilla dark brown; inside bill fleshy horn colour; pharynx black; total length, 27.5 cm.; spread, 49.5 cm.; weight, 97 grammes; stomach contents,

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by Mr. A. M. Lea, two pill beetles (*Microchaetes scoparius*) and remains of several others, numerous heads of ants (soldiers of *Pheidole*, *Iridomyrmex*, *Ectatomma metallicum*), head of small wasp, bits of small millipedes (*Julus*), head of small weevil (*Ethemaia sellata*), bit of small ground beetle (*sub-fam. Harpalides*), many small fragments, mostly of ants, a small amount of a greasy-looking substance, sand and fine grit, two small seeds of different kinds, a small nematode worm—probably a parasite of the bird itself.

June 23.—Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*) male and female. The first birds of this species for the winter were seen at North Adelaide.

June 29.—A Cockatoo Parrot (*Leptolophus hollandicus*) flew over this morning at North Adelaide. As it was without a tail it had probably escaped from captivity.

July 20.—A Magpie-Lark was observed carrying lining to a nest built in a big Moreton Bay figtree in Hurtle Square, City.

July 22.—A male Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) in full plumage was noted at North Adelaide.

August 1.—About 100 White-faced Herons (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*) were seen on a swamp near Camden.

By Professor J. B. Cleland.

He had noticed the surface of his earth lawn tennis-court marred by scars and found that they were caused by White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*), which birds were bringing down large insects and thrashing them on the court.

By N. B. Tindale.

On June 12, 1931, saw in one of the paddocks of "Poltalloch," near Wellington, a flock of 52 Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*).

By F. E. Parsons.

At Glen Osmond, at 7.45 p.m. on 10th September, 1931 (a dark night), birds were heard passing overhead and uttering barking calls, which he considers were from Banded Stilts (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*). He could not determine the direction in which the birds were travelling, as whilst he listened, the calls came from all directions and the birds seemed to be in large numbers.