

The Lakes and the Coorong.

(By J. Sutton.)

From 9th to 13th May, 1931, a party consisting of Dr. A. S. Randell, Mr. E. S. Rymill, Dr. A. M. Morgan, and myself, made a trip in the motor-launch of the first-named on Lake Alexandra and the Coorong. We motored to Goolwa in the afternoon of 9th May and slept on board the launch at its anchorage there. Leaving next morning at 8.25 a.m., and proceeding by way of the Goolwa and Coorong Channels, we arrived off Tauwitchere Island at 11 a.m. On account of heavy rain we did not land, but going on we went down the Coorong as far as the bay beyond Boundary Bluff, on the mainland, half-a-mile past Sam's Island and about 31 miles from Goolwa. We reached there at 2.40 p.m., landed, and walked along a very sandy track to the nearest part of Lake Albert, about one mile away. The land bordering on the Coorong at this place was of a sandy nature with patches of scrub, but near the Lake it was cleared and had been under cultivation. We saw very little of the Lake as it was bordered with large teatrees, and we were at the final bend. During this walk and at the Lake we noted:—Grebes, sp., Cormorants, sp., Pelicans, Silver Gulls, Spur-winged Plovers, White Ibis, White-faced Herons, Black Swans, Black Ducks, Duck, sp., Willie Wagtails, Flame Robins, Grey Shrike Thrush, White-browed Babblers, White-fronted Chats, Brown Thornbill, Yellow-tailed Thornbills, Shy Ground Wrens, Superb Blue Wren, Singing Honeyeater, Red Wattle-Bird, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Pipits, Ravens, Grey Butcher-Bird, and White-backed Magpies.

Leaving this anchorage on the 11th at 8.30 a.m., we proceeded to the opposite shore, Younghusband Peninsula, to a bay over a mile to the south-west. Whilst Dr. Morgan and I walked to the ocean shore, Encounter Bay, the other two tried for ducks. Fortunately we had a short walk of half-a-mile, probably the narrowest part in the peninsula, and after the rain the surface was firm over the sandhills. We saw about the ocean shore Crested Terns, Silver Gulls, Double-banded Dotterel, Eastern Curlew, White-fronted Chats, and Singing Honeyeaters. On account of the heavy spray we could only see the shore-line for about a quarter of a mile in each direction.

At the high-water mark Dr. Morgan found the body of a young whale, which was decomposing. Its measurements were:—Total length, 8 ft. 2 in.; head, 22 in.; jawbone, 19 in.; beak, 12 in. On showing the two teeth, which were taken as

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mementoes, to Mr. H. M. Hale, Director of the South Australian Museum, he identified them as belonging to *Mesoplodon grayii*, the Small-toothed Beaked Whale, the second record of its occurrence in South Australia, the Museum's first specimen being a portion of a jawbone found on Kangaroo Island. From our directions Mr. Hale was enabled later (in June) to secure nearly all the skeleton.

We left this anchorage at 3 p.m., and reached Deep Creek at 6 p.m., where we stayed until 10.30 a.m. on 11th May, then proceeding to Ewe Island Creek, arriving there at 11.30 a.m. We first landed on Long Island, then crossed over to Ewe Island by a narrow bridge used for sheep. Dr. Morgan and I walked across the latter island whilst the others looked for ducks. We left next morning, 13th May, at 10 a.m., visited Goat Island in Dunn's Lagoon for an hour, and reached Goolwa at 3 p.m.

The outing was kindly arranged by Dr. Randell to enable us to see the avian inhabitants in the autumn. We found they were greatly reduced in numbers from those observed on our visit from 18th to 23rd October, 1930 (see "South Australian Ornithologist," Vol. XI, p. 24), when we noted 21,265 individuals, whilst this time the total was 3,472, the great falling off being in the migratory waders. The sandspit near Deep Creek, where we saw thousands (page 29), was in May under water and not a bird was seen there.

In Lake Alexandrina and the Coorong there was much water and some of the sandspits were covered, whilst others were much reduced in size. On Ewe Island shore a few dead Mottled Shore Crabs (*Paragrapsus gaimardii*) were noticed. Scarcely any mosquitoes were met with. The only birds calling at night were heard at Deep Creek between 8.48 and 9.20 p.m.—Mountain and Black Ducks and a Silver Gull.

The species noted numbered 49, represented by 3,472 individuals, which are indicated by the numbers in parentheses after the names in the subjoined list. The observations of all the members of the party are included in the particulars.

Coturnix pectoralis, Stubble Quail (4).—On Ewe Island.

Podiceps cristatus, Great Crested Grebe (45).—All on the Coorong. Usually on flushing this species flies low, but one flock of fourteen was seen flying at a height of about 100 feet.

Podiceps poliocephalus, Hoary-headed Grebe (20).—Eight on the Coorong, 12 on Lake Albert.

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Phalacrocorax varius, Pied Cormorant (63).—A specimen was taken at Ewe Island:—Total length, 79 cm.; spread, 123 cm.; weight, 3½ lb.; iris grey; bill, maxilla-ridge light horn colour, lateral plates yellowish grey, mandible and pouch yellowish grey; spot in front of eye bright yellow; legs and feet black; inside mouth and palate horn grey. It had a great many peritoneal worms. Stomach contents—a small fish, bits of two mottled shore crabs, fish remains and a small stone. As writers differ with regard to the eating qualities of the genus four slices were cut from the breast of this bird. They were fried without any special preparation and I thought that my slice tasted like teal, but dry.

Microcarbo melanoleucus, Little Pied Cormorant (103).—Two specimens were taken at Ewe Island; (a) ♂; total length, 57 cm.; spread, 87.5 cm.; weight, 1¼ lb.; iris dark grey; bill, ridge black, tomia, mandible and pouch orange; legs and feet black; inside mouth yellow, back of palate grey; stomach contents: one small mullet, fish remains, and portions of a mottled shore crab. (b) ♂; total length, 56 cm.; spread, 81 cm.; weight, 1¼ lb.; the soft parts similar excepting the tomia, mandible and pouch, which were light yellow; stomach contents: eight small mottled shore crabs.

Cormorants (114).—The species could not be identified.

Pelecanus conspicillatus, Pelican (189).—Ten on Lake Albert.

Hydroprogne caspia, Caspian Tern (73).—Sixty-one in the Goolwa Channel.

Sterna bergii, Crested Tern (108).—Ninety in the Goolwa Channel, 5 in Encounter Bay.

Sterna nereis, Fairy Tern (264).—Two hundred and sixty-two on the Coorong.

Larus novae-hollandiae, Silver Gull (721).

Gabianus pacificus, Pacific Gull (1).—An immature bird, seen in the Goolwa Channel.

Haematopus ostralegus, Pied Oyster-catcher (19).—On the shores, 1 in the Coorong Channel, 18 in the Coorong.

Lobibyx novae-hollandiae, Spur-winged Plover (69).—Eleven near Lake Albert.

Charadrius bicinctus, Double-banded Dotterel (96).—Eighty-eight on sandspits in the Goolwa Channel (66 of these on the "Sanderling" Spit), 8 on Younghusband Peninsula (7 on the Coorong shore, 1 on the Encounter Bay Shore).

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Charadrius ruficapillus, Red-capped Dotterel (13).

Dotterel (41).—The species could not be identified.

Recurvirostra novae-hollandiae, Red-necked Avocet (72).—A flock standing on an islet south of Ewe Island.

Numenius cyanopus, Eastern Curlew (33).—On the shores, 2 in the Goolwa Channel, 11 in the Coorong Channel, 8 in the Coorong, 11 on Ewe Island, and 1 flying northerly above the surf on the Encounter Bay shore.

Tringa nebularia, Greenshank (4).—Along the shores of the Coorong.

Erolia ruficollis, Red-necked Stint (62).—Fourteen on the Coorong shore of Younghusband Peninsula, and 48 on Ewe Island.

Crocethia alba, Sanderling (18).—A flock on the sandspit three miles below Goolwa, where Dr. Randell had obtained specimens and seen the species (See "S.A. Ornithologist," Vol. X, p. 339, and Vol. XI, p. 23).

Calidris canutus, Knot (25).—These were seen in one flock standing in shallow water at the shore line of a small islet covered with samphire, off Ewe Island. One bird was in full breeding plumage with its breast red. Its head and neck was hunched up. It appeared exactly like a specimen ♂ in breeding plumage in the S.A. Museum from South Oland, in the Baltic Sea, 5/8/1901. The breast of another of the flock was not quite so red. The remainder were in non-breeding plumage. For 20 minutes we observed these birds through field-glasses, and on attempting to get closer they flew away to the north.

Waders (2).—The species could not be identified. One, in the Goolwa Channel, was larger than a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper; the other was seen in Ewe Island Creek and may have been a Sanderling.

Threskiornis molucca, White Ibis (114).—Four on Lake Albert, 110 about Ewe Island.

Egretta alba, White Egret (14).—On 11th May we saw one flock of 11 near Ewe Island; next day a flock of 12 were on Mundoo Island, one on Long Island, and one on Hindmarsh Island.

Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae, White-faced Heron (53).

Chenopsis atrata, Black Swan (105).

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Casarca tadornoides, Mountain Duck (328).—One hundred and ninety-seven were seen in the Coorong, 130 of them near Younghusband Peninsula, 125 near Ewe Island, 6 in Dunn's Lagoon. Three specimens were taken near Younghusband Peninsula. (a) ♂; total length, 59 cm.; spread, 113 cm.; weight, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ lb.; iris very dark brown; bill black; legs and feet leaden grey; inside mouth whitish; stomach contents: sand and vegetable matter. (b) ♂; total length, 64 cm.; spread, 113 cm.; weight, 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. (c) ♀; total length, 56 cm.; spread, 100 cm.; weight, 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ lb. The soft parts and stomach contents of *b* and *c* were similar to *a*.

Anas superciliosa, Black Duck (175).—Seven in the Coorong Channel, 11 on Lake Albert, 25 in the Coorong, 13 of them near Younghusband Peninsula, 120 near Ewe Island, and 12 in Dunn's Lagoon. Two specimens were taken. (a) Younghusband Peninsula, ♀; total length, 49 cm.; spread, 84 cm.; weight, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.; iris brown; bill maxilla leaden blue, mandible black at sides of base, the rest black, point leaden blue with a little black tip; legs and feet dull greenish yellow, webs dull blue; inside mouth white; stomach contents: sand and vegetable matter. (b) Ewe Island, ♂; total length, 55.5 cm.; spread, 79 cm.; weight, 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ lb.; iris bright brown; bill, maxilla olive green, nib black, mandible base black, point lead colour, tip black; legs and feet yellowish brown; inside mouth light horn colour; stomach contents: sand and many small yellow seeds.

Querquedula castanea, Chestnut Teal (5).—All in the Coorong, 3 of them on Younghusband Peninsula, 2 of which were secured. (a) ♂; total length, 40 cm.; spread, 66 cm.; weight, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ lb.; iris light brown; bill, maxilla leaden blue, tip and rim black; mandible, base black, anterior half yellowish; legs and feet leaden blue, webs dull black; inside mouth yellowish white; stomach contents: sand, vegetable matter, and one small brown seed. (b) ♀; total length, 39 cm.; spread, 68 cm.; weight, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ lb.; soft parts similar to *a*; stomach contents: sand and vegetable matter.

Querquedula gibberifrons, Grey Teal (63).—Two in the Coorong Channel, 24 at Ewe Island, 37 on the Coorong, 24 of them near Younghusband Peninsula. Four specimens were secured. (a) Younghusband Peninsula, ♂; total length, 41 cm.; spread, 71 cm.; weight, 1 lb.; iris brick red; bill, maxilla leaden blue, rim and point black, mandible, base black, then a band of yellowish horn colour, tip black; legs and feet leaden blue. webs dull black; inside mouth yellowish white; stomach contents:

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sand, vegetable matter, and small black seeds. (b) ♂; total length, 35 cm.; spread, 71 cm.; weight, 1 lb.; stomach contents: sand, shell grit, vegetable matter, and small black seeds. (c) ♀; total length, 40 cm.; spread, 79 cm.; weight, 1½ lb.; stomach contents: sand and vegetable matter. Soft parts of *b* and *c* similar to *a*. (d) Ewe Island, ♀; total length, 39 cm.; spread, 62.5 cm.; weight, ¾ lb.; iris bright brown; bill, maxilla dark slate, nib black, mandible base black, then a band of yellow speckled with black, tip black; legs and feet leaden grey; inside mouth yellowish white; stomach contents: sand and vegetable matter.

Spatula rhynchotis, Blue-winged Shoveler (25).—A flock on the Coorong.

Biziura lobata, Musk Duck (8).—Seven in the Coorong, 1 in Dunn's Lagoon.

Duck sp. (22).—The species could not be identified.

Circus approximans, Swamp Harrier (1).

Haliastur sphenurus, Whistling Eagle (1).

Falco cenchroides, Nankeen Kestrel (2).

Glossopsitta porphyrocephala, Purple-crowned Lorikeet (2).—Flew overhead whilst we were on Goat Island.

Neophema elegans, Elegant Parrot (8).—Six on Youngusband Peninsula, and 2 on Goat Island.

Neophema petrophila, Rock Parrot (20).—A flock on Ewe Island.

Neophema sp. (2).—On an islet in the Goolwa Channel. Species not identified.

Hirundo neoxena, Welcome Swallow (50).

Rhipidura leucophrys, Willie Wagtail (3).—Two near Lake Albert, 1 on Goat Island.

Petroica phoenicea, Flame Robin (2).—Both ♂, close to Lake Albert.

Colluricincla harmonica, Grey Shrike Thrush (1).—Near Lake Albert.

Grallina cyanoleuca, Magpie-Lark (2).—On Goat Island.

Pomatostomus superciliosus, White-browed Babbler (2).—Near Lake Albert.

Epthianura albifrons, White-fronted Chat (105).—Fifty-eight near Lake Albert.

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Acanthiza pusilla, Brown Thornbill (3).—One near Lake Albert, 2 on Goat Island.

Acanthiza chrysorrhoa, Yellow-tailed Thornbill (5).—Near Lake Albert.

Hylacola cauta, Shy Ground Wren (2).—Near Lake Albert.

Megalurus gramineus, Little Grassbird (4).—One on Tauwitchere Island, 3 at Deep Creek.

Cisticola exilis, Golden-headed Fantail-Warbler (7).—One on Tauwitchere Island, 6 at Deep Creek. We were desirous of finding out whether this species was still present. One bird was heard calling "chenk-chenk" 10 times whilst we were off Tauwitchere Island. In Deep Creek we were right against the bank of an islet upon which much lignum (*Muehlenbeckia Cunninghamii*) was growing. Before sunrise four birds were heard calling the above notes. Sometimes a bird would fly upwards some 50 feet or so, and calling whilst doing so, then suddenly drop down to the bushes. In October, 1930, on Tauwitchere Island, the ascending bird, on reaching its highest point, would circle around and sing for some minutes before dropping down. On this trip I did not hear the first buzzing call, which I record as "fizzy," uttered at any time; probably it is a call given only in the breeding season.

Malurus cyaneus, Superb Blue Wren (3).—One near Lake Albert, 2 at Deep Creek.

Zosterops halmaturina, Grey-backed Silvereye (7).—At Deep Creek.

Gliciphila melanops, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (1).—On Ewe Island.

Meliphaga virescens, Singing Honeyeater (28).—Ten near Lake Albert.

Anthochaera carunculata, Red Wattle-Bird (5).—Near Lake Albert.

Acanthagenys rufogularis, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (6).—Four on Youngusband Peninsula, 2 near Lake Albert.

Anthus australis, Pipit (13).—Six near Lake Albert, 1 at Deep Creek, 1 on Ewe Island, 5 on Goat Island.

Corvus coronoides, Raven (7).—Three near Lake Albert.

Cracticus torquatus, Grey Butcher-Bird (1).—Near Lake Albert.

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Gymnorhina hypoleuca, White-backed Magpie (53).—Sixteen near Lake Albert.

Unidentified (55).—Fifty-three in the Coorong Channel, 2 on the Coorong.

In addition, between Adelaide and Goolwa 26 species, totalling 436 birds, were noted. Those species marked thus * were seen also in the Lakes and Coorong trip:—Brush Bronzewing (*Phaps elegans*) (1); Bronzewing sp. (2); *Pied Cormorant (1); *Silver Gull (21); *Purple-crowned Lorikeet (2); Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*) (30); Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adelaidae*) (32); Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*) (65); Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*) (9); *Welcome Swallow (15); *Willie Wagtail (12); Jacky Winter (*Microeca fascinans*) (1); Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*) (7); Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*) (1); *Magpie-Lark (6); *Grey-backed Silvereye (5); White-fronted Chat (9); *Yellow-tailed Thornbill (1); *Superb Blue Wren (5); *Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (1); *Singing Honeyeater (1); Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*) (22); Noisy Miner (*Myzantha melanocephala*) (3); *Red Wattle-Bird (1); *Pipit (2); *Raven (4); *White-backed Magpie (177).