

A Trip to Lake Salmon, S.A.

By Walter Cain.

Last Easter I had a most enjoyable outing to Lake Salmon with Messrs. Pearce and Orchard, of Port Augusta, and Mr. Nicholson, of Kalgoorlie, W.A. The route was by the main north road to Yadlamalka Homestead thirty-four miles, then six miles north-west to Seepage Swamp, where we camped on Thursday night (25th March, 1937). It is a fine sheet of water and at the time of our visit was the home of a wonderful collection of birds. On Friday morning we had a look around the Black Oaks (*Casuarina*) in a canoe for the nests of Pink-eared Ducks—three had nested a month previously in these trees, using the old nests of White-browed Babblers; however, nothing was found in that line. In the Black Oaks in three feet of water I flushed a Waxbill (= Chestnut-eared Finch) and found the nest with four fresh eggs—a rather uncommon nesting-place for this species. Five nests of the Black Swan were located on the big island in the Swamp with eight, seven, six, three, and two eggs respectively—the eight well incubated and the others fresh. This is a fine island for nesting, but nothing occupied it excepting the Swans and four Spur-winged Plovers. I noted a flock of eleven Terns standing off in the water from this island, and on our approach they flew off and were not seen again. They were strangers to me and appeared to resemble the Marsh Tern. I noted many flappers amongst the Ducks on this water, noticeably the common Teal and Widgeon (White-eyed Duck). We shot one of the former and the bird was practically destitute of wing feathers. Mountain, Grey (= Freckled), Wood (= Maned Geese), Black, Blue-wing (Shoveler), Widgeon, common (Grey) Teal, and Pink-eared Ducks were in large numbers. We left the Seepage Swamp on Saturday morning (27th March) for Lake Salmon. The mileage is Seepage Swamp to Willochra Creek, Kallioota Station, eight miles (the country in this area was in splendid condition, and at the Willochra Creek Quail were seen in very large numbers crossing the Creek), another seven miles due west is Lake Salmon, a fine

sheet of water with an abundance of all varieties of birds. I noted the Speckled Warbler here; and two nests of the Magpie Lark were found, but the drooping Black Oak limbs were too slender to climb. A Budgerygah was seen coming out of a small hollow in a Myall (*Acacia*), but we did not investigate. Five Pelicans were noted on Lake Salmon and a fine mob of Ducks, representative of the species seen at Seepage Swamp. On Saturday afternoon we paid a visit to a chain of waterholes called "Salt Holes." They are the overflow from Lake Salmon before they empty themselves into Lake Torrens, and retain a depth of about four feet of water before the overflow takes place. Salt Holes are four miles from Lake Salmon; there is no road and the washed-out state of the locality is treacherous for a motor-car, and three-parts of the distance were done in low gear. No one ever goes there, and it is a wild, desolate, wind-swept spot. The water at the time of our visit was perfectly fresh, but it eventually turns very salt—hence the name Salt Holes. There was a good flock of Ducks here, a few Black Swan and a nice flock of sixty White-headed Stilts. Four Silver Gulls were also noted. I was surprised to find that no breeding was taking place on the fine islands available at Salt Holes, and there were no signs of any Red-necked Avocets' nests, nor any of the species. A Black Swan's nest just completed was found. Amongst the dead Samphire in about two feet of water at the Lake Torrens end I noted many old nests of Ducks, probably the Grey Teal or the Pink-eared. They must breed here very freely at times. We left Lake Salmon on Sunday morning and went back to Seepage Swamp, where we camped; leaving there early Monday morning (29th March) we arrived at Port Augusta at 10 a.m., everyone being satisfied that a most enjoyable trip had been spent under ideal weather conditions.

Emu (*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*).—Several mobs were seen from the Seepage Swamp to Kallioota.

Little Quail (*Turnix velox*) in large numbers and a few Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*) were on the Willochra Creek flats in Kallioota.

Black-tailed Native-Hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*).—Sixteen were noted on the sandhills about the Seepage Swamp.

Bald Coot (*Porphyrio melanotus*) and Coot (*Fulica atra*) were in large numbers at the Seepage Swamp.

Little Pied Cormorant (*Microcarbo melanoleucus*), plentiful at Seepage Swamp.

Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*); five were seen at Lake Salmon.

Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*).—Six seen at the Seepage Swamp.

Tern (*Sterna* sp.).—Eleven seen at Seepage Swamp.

Silver Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae*).—Four seen at the Salt Holes.

Red-kneed Dotterel (*Erythrogonys cinctus*).—Several pairs at the Seepage Swamp.

Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*).—Four at the Seepage Swamp.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—Fairly plentiful.

Australian Dotterel (*Peltohyas australis*).—Several pairs were noted.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).—A flock of sixty at the Salt Holes.

Maned Geese (*Chenonetta jubata*).

Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*).

Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).

Grey Teal (*Querquedula gibberifrons*).

Blue-winged Shoveler (*Spatula rhynchotis*).

Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*).

Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*).

White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*).

} Met with
at Seepage Swamp
and Lake Salmon.

Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*).—Noted at Seepage Swamp and the Salt Holes. In my experience there is not much nesting where Swans are, as they are the biggest bullies of the water birds.

Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*).—One seen at Kallioota.

Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*).—Six noted between Seepage Swamp and Kallioota.

Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*).—Eleven seen throughout the trip.

Budgerygah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—Seen at Lake Salmon.

Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*).—Nesting at Lake Salmon.

Wedgebill (*Sphenostoma cristata*).—Two seen at Lake Salmon.

White-browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*).—A few seen throughout the trip.

White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*) and Orange Chat (*E. aurifrons*).—Were not at all plentiful, considering the fine condition of the district.

Rufous Field-Wren (*Calamanthus campestris*).—Were seen at Wilkalana.

*Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola sagittata*) ?.—Noted at Lake Salmon.

Wren (*Malurus* sp.), unidentified.—Only six seen, four of them at Kallioota.

Chestnut-eared Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*).—Plentiful.

Crow (*Corvus* sp.)—Plentiful everywhere—they don't seem to have suffered in the drought.

Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*).—One noted at the Seepage Swamp in a Black Oak.

(Later in August, 1937, Mr. Pearce visited the Seepage Swamp and Kallioota again. At the former place he found that the water birds had dwindled in numbers, due probably to so much surface water being about. At Kallioota he had never seen a finer muster of birds in the Creek—Cockatoo Parrots (*Leptolophus hollandicus*) were in great numbers; and Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*) were well represented. The Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) and Black Falcon (*F. subniger*) were also there—they seem to follow the bird-life about.)

* [*Chthonicola sagittata*, Speckled Warbler.—The only records (all by F. W. Andrews) in the S.A. Museum are:—

October, 1868.—Nine specimens from Tarpeena, seventeen miles north of Mount Gambier.

1875.—One specimen taken during the Elder Exploring Expedition, 1874-75.

1883.—Two specimens from Coralbignie, Gawler Ranges, collected between 26th July and 20th August, 1883. One of these is the only specimen from S.A. now held by the Museum, and is the one referred to in North, Vol. I, p. 261, but the date given there is not correct.—Editors.]