

Some Birds of the South and Central Australian Border.

By H. T. Condon.

During June, 1937, the following birds were seen about the border of South Australia and Central Australia during a brief sojourn in the vicinity of Abminga, Blood's Creek, and Mount Daer Station. The journey from Adelaide to Abminga was made by train and about 40 miles were traversed on camels from Blood's Creek in a north-easterly direction towards Mount Daer and the Simpson (Arunta) Desert, from 15th to 20th June.

At Marree (442 miles) at 8.30 a.m. on 11th June Crested Pigeons, a Whistling Eagle, Galahs, Crows, and Sparrows were noted.

Coward Springs (522 miles) was reached on 11th June at 2.45 p.m. Heavy rain had fallen here earlier in the day and the sky was overcast. Banded Plovers, a Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterels, Welcome Swallows, a Tree Martin, and a Willie Wagtail were seen at the spring.

We arrived at Abminga (797 miles) on 12th June at 6 a.m. It was very cold and dark and there was also a dense fog. Half-a-day was spent among the trees along the Abminga Creek when the following species were seen:—Crested Pigeons, Whistling Eagles, Willie Wagtails, Crested Bellbirds, White-browed Bblers, Black-faced Wood-Swallows, Red-browed Pardalotes, Singing, White-plumed (the northern yellowish phase), and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, a Pipit, two flocks of Zebra Finches, Crows, and a Black-backed Magpie.

Twenty-three miles were traversed southwards to Blood's Creek by motor truck and our destination was reached in the late afternoon of 12th June. On 15th June we set out on camels at 4.15 p.m. for Mount Daer Head Station. We pitched camp at a permanent water known as "the Rockhole" on the Abminga

Creek some ten miles from Blood's Creek at 9.30 p.m. Two Grey Teal were disturbed at this waterhole next morning at 6.30 a.m.

Most of the country traversed was nearly devoid of vegetation, but on the dry watercourses it was often luxuriant. Several stretches of gibbers were also encountered. Generally speaking, the district seemed unsuited for either a large or varied bird population.

After leaving Mount Daer Station we continued along the watercourse of the Finke River until Etulileluli Waterhole was reached at 1 p.m. on 18th June. This is a permanent waterhole with two large stretches of water flanked by fairly tall gums and low bushes. The surrounding plains have been denuded by cattle. Little Grebes, Brolgas, and two Grey Teal were seen at the waterhole.

From this place we left the Finke and struck out towards Anacoora Bore, the last permanent water before the outskirts of the Simpson Desert are reached. At this point we turned back and returned by a devious route through Kathleen Well on the Finke River, south-west of Etulileluli, to Blood's Creek, which was reached at 10.30 p.m. on 20th June.

The original blackfellows of this area belonged to the Aranda (Arunta) tribe, but few now remain. They have been superseded to a large extent by natives from Lilla Creek (to the west of Blood's Creek) and belong to the Antakarinja tribe. Some Luritja natives are also met with. A few Antakarinja names for the birds are included below. Blood's Creek is known as Munangu, while old Federal Head Station is called Urninitja by these natives. One Aranda native described the Owllet Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristata*) as a bird occurring in the Blood's Creek district, but none was seen by the writer. On 17th June I saw four Honeyeaters at a spot between Mount Daer and Etulileluli. These birds seemed at first glance to have the actions and colourations of a Purple-gaped Honeyeater† (*Meliphaga cratitia*) and were thought to be such at the time. I have since learnt that this species has not been recorded from the inland of this State.

† [*Meliphaga cratitia*.—The furthest northern record for this species is at 101 miles north of Adelaide at a spot seven miles south of Port Broughton on 6/9/1925.—Editors.]

A list of the species noted is appended with remarks; an asterisk denotes that a specimen was obtained:—

Dromaius novae-hollandiae, Emu.—Fresh tracks were seen near Anacoora Bore.

Ocyphaps lophotes, Crested Pigeon.—Three were seen at Marree; five at Abminga; six between the Rockhole and Mount Daer; and twelve between Mount Daer and Etulileluli.

Podiceps ruficollis, Little Grebe.—Two seen at Etulileluli.

Erythrogonys cinctus, Red-kneed Dotterel.—One at Coward Springs.

Lobibyx novae-hollandiae, Spur-winged Plover.—A small flock near the Rockhole.

Zonifer tricolor, Banded Plover.—Four at Coward Springs.

Charadrius melanops, Black-fronted Dotterel.—Three at Coward Springs.

Peltohyas australis, Australian Dotterel.—Two were seen near a gibber plain between Etulileluli and Anacoora Bore.

Eupodotis australis, Bustard.—Many fresh tracks near Anacoora Bore.

Grus rubicundus, Brolga (Native Companion).—Two at Etulileluli.

Querquedula gibberifrons, Grey Teal.—Two at the Rockhole; two at Etulileluli.

Circus assimilis, Spotted Harrier.—One between Mount Daer and Etulileluli.

Uroaetus audax, Wedge-tailed Eagle.—One at Blood's Creek.

**Haliastur sphenurus*, Whistling Eagle, native name "Itatura." One at Marree; three at Abminga; twelve in one day at Blood's Creek; many seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer; and at Etulileluli. ♀; iris, brown; bill, horn colour; feet, white; total length, 58.5 cm.; wing-span, 135.0 cm.

Falco berigora, Brown Hawk.—One between the Rockhole and Mount Daer.

Falco cenchroides, Nankeen Kestrel.—One between the Rockhole and Mount Daer; and another between Mount Daer and the Finke River.

Kakatoe roseicapilla, Galah.—Two at Marree and many flocks were seen as far east as Anacoora Bore.

Barnardius sp.—Six birds were seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer, but no specimen was obtained. I thought

I saw a reddish forehead and a small orange spot on the belly, *B. barnardi*, but *Barnardius zonarius*, Port Lincoln Parrot, is the only species that has been recorded from Edwards Creek, 160 miles south of the above locality, to the border and in Central Australia, as well as in the Everard, Musgrave, and Mann Ranges in S.A. to the west.

Cuculus pallidus, Pallid Cuckoo. — Two were seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer on 16th June, 1937.

Chalcites basalis, Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo. — One was seen near Kathleen Well on 20th June, 1927.

Hirundo neoxena, Welcome Swallow. — Nine were seen at Coward Springs; noted also at Blood's Creek; the Rockhole; and Mount Daer.

Hylochelidon nigricans, Tree Martin. — One at Coward Springs.

Rhipidura leucophrys, Willie Wagtail. — Odd birds were seen at Coward Springs; Abminga; Blood's Creek; between the Rockhole and Mount Daer; at Etulileluli; and near Anacoora Bore.

**Petroica goodenovii*, Red-capped Robin. — A female and young were seen near the Rockhole and a young male on the Finke River near Mount Daer.

**Pachycephala rufiventris*, Rufous Whistler. — A female was obtained near Kathleen Well.

**Grallina cyanoleuca*, Magpie-Lark. — One was seen at the Rockhole, and one between Mount Daer and Etulileluli.

Oreoica gutturalis, Crested Bellbird. — Seven were seen at Abminga; one was seen near Kathleen Well, where one was heard calling at 7 a.m. The sound was indistinguishable from the note of a camel-bell, except for its regularity and persistence.

**Sphenostoma cristatum*, Wedgebill. — Two birds were seen on the Finke River near Mount Daer. The call was short and very musical. ♂; iris, brown; total length, 22.0 cm.; wing-spread, 25.5 cm.

**Coracina novae-hollandiae*, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike. — Native name "mamajideri." Several birds were seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer. ♀; total length, 32.5 cm.; wing-spread, 59.0 cm.

Pomatostomus superciliosus, White-browed Babbler. — Fifteen were seen at Abminga.

Ashbyia lovensis, Gibber-Bird. — Three were seen on a gibber plain between Etulileluli and Anacoora Bore.

**Smicrornis flavescens*, Yellow Weebill.—Over twenty were seen between Mount Daer and Etulileluli.

**Acanthiza uropygialis*, Chestnut-tailed Thornbill.—Four were seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer and several others about the Finke River near Mount Daer. ♂; total length, 9.25 cm.; wing-spread, 15.25 cm.

**Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, Yellow-tailed Thornbill.—A few small parties were seen between the Rockhole and Mount Daer. ♂; total length, 11.0 cm.; wing-spread, 19.0 cm.

**Artamus melanops*, Black-faced Wood-Swallow.—Native name "talbundi." This species was easily the most numerous of the smaller birds. It was seen on all the watercourses, often in flocks of fifty or more; twenty were seen at Abminga.

Pardalotus rubricatus, Red-browed Pardalote.—Three were seen at Abminga. The loud, musical ventriloquial call was distinctive.

Meliphaga virescens, Singing Honeyeater.—Three were seen at Abminga, and one at Kathleen Well.

Meliphaga penicillata, *leilavalensis*, White-plumed Honeyeater. A wide-spread species, being seen at Abminga; Blood's Creek; the Rockhole; Mount Daer; on the Finke River to Etulileluli.

**Myzantha flavigula*, Yellow-throated Miner.—Native name "pibil." Little parties of from six to a dozen were met with on the watercourses. ♀; total length, 25.5 cm.; wing-spread, 36.7 cm.

Acanthagenys rufogularis, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater.—Two at Abminga; two between the Rockhole and Mount Daer; four on the Finke River, near Mount Daer.

Anthus australis, Pipit.—One at Abminga; two at Blood's Creek.

Taeniopygia castanotis, Zebra Finch.—Flocks were seen at Abminga and near the Rockhole. Several flocks with young uncoloured birds amongst them were seen at Etulileluli on 19th June, 1937.

Corvus bennetti, Little Crow.—A large community of this species was attached to the Mount Daer H.S. Between fifty and 100 birds enlivened the place with their harsh cries, and most of them seemed loth to leave the immediate vicinity for fear of missing some scrap of food. Two birds were collected and proved to be this species (a) ♂ adult; iris, white; bill, legs and feet, black; total length, 46.0 cm.; wing-spread, 95.0 cm.;

(b) ♂ juv.; iris, brown; total length, 45.0 cm.; wing-spread, 86.0 cm. The native name is "karnka." No other Crows seen (fifteen at Marree and twelve at Abminga) could be identified with certainty.

Cracticus nigrogularis, Pied Butcher-Bird.—Four were seen near the Rockhole.

Gymnorhina tibicen, Black-backed Magpie.—Magpies are uncommon birds in this region. One was seen at Abminga and four at the Rockhole. Local residents say they only appear after rain.

Passer domesticus, Sparrow.—A few of this species were seen at Marree; Abminga; and Blood's Creek.
