

## A Trip to Eastern Kangaroo Island.

By C. E. Rix.

From 26th March to 8th April, 1937, was spent by the writer at Penneshaw in the eastern end of Kangaroo Island. During that period trips were made by motor-car to Antechamber Bay, Rocky River, and Hog Bay River Station, the last place was visited on two occasions. The first four days were very rough with very strong north-west to south-west winds, while during the rest of the period the weather was either calm or with very light south to south-east breezes. During the rough weather the Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) was seen in considerable numbers and their dog-like barking call was frequently heard during the day, but in the calm weather only occasional birds were seen and more rarely heard. One bird which was seen on three occasions near the Penneshaw jetty during the calm weather had its upper parts a cinnamon colour instead of the usual blue-grey. On several calm nights a noise like the wailing of several babies was heard. The sound appeared to come from the reef near the jetty, and one night upon investigating with a powerful torch, five or six Penguins were seen sitting on the rocks. Immediately the light shone on them they ceased making the noise, and although some time was spent to discover their actions while making the noise, I was not successful, as each time the torch was switched off they shifted

their positions. Only one species of Albatross was seen, and from its yellow beak and distinct black brow was taken to be the Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris*). Twice during the rough weather a bird of this species was seen quite close to the shore, and when homeward bound on the s.s. "Karatta" one came up to the steamer when opposite Port Willunga and followed for three or four miles. This bird was seen to great advantage as it glided to and fro across the stern, at times being from fifteen to twenty feet away. The Cormorants were represented by three species, the most numerous of which was the Pied (*Phalacrocorax varius*). On some of the birds of this species the bare skin in front of the eye was a very bright orange colour. The White-breasted (*P. fuscescens*) was the next in numbers. This species appears to be smaller in size than the Pied and to have a less laboured and awkward flight when rising from the water. Only two or three Little Pied (*Microcarbo melanoleucus*) were seen. They were near the American River at Rocky Point. Australian Gannets (*Sula serrator*) were only noted during the rough weather, when on those four days the species was seen either singly or in small parties up to five. Often in their quest for food the birds came within thirty to forty yards of the cliffs and on one occasion two flew low over the jetty. The height from which they dived to procure food varied from about six to thirty feet and more often than not the bird went completely under water. A flock of five Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and several odd birds were seen. The Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) were in numbers and flocks of 50 to 100 were frequently noticed sitting on piles of rock. The Fairy Terns (*S. nereis*) were often noted singly or in small flocks up to a dozen birds which frequently mingled with the Crested. The Fairy Terns on several occasions disappeared beneath the surface of the water when diving for food. †A strange Tern was seen one day sitting on a rock in Christmas Cove, an almost land-locked inlet. It did not fly until approached within twenty yards. On taking flight it circled overhead several times uttering a call of "gurra-wuk, gurra-wuk." The bird had the back and upper sides of wings black; under parts and forehead, white; bill, black; slightly smaller than the Crested Tern, but the wings longer and more tapered. As several of the Crested were flying about near it the compari-

[† Tern sp. The description may refer to a Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*), the first specimen of that species was taken in South Australia at Brighton on 28th March, 1937—see page 77 of this Volume. Their calls are given as "wide-awake," "ka-ka-ka," "go-ak," "twa-oo," "oo-ee."—Editors.]

son of size and shape were possible. The Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) was very numerous. One bird was in immature plumage and on several occasions was seen to assert itself when any food was to be procured by driving away fully adult birds. Both phases of the Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) were noted. Each day during the rough weather Arctic Skuas were observed from the shore at Penneshaw and at times they harassed Silver Gulls and Terns until the chased dropped the food they had procured. The falling titbit was caught almost invariably by the Skua before it reached the sea. Five birds of this species followed the "Karatta" on the homeward journey for some three hours. One had the under parts and collar creamy white with the head and upper parts dark brown; the other four were brown on the upper parts, with a faint mottled collar and mottled brown beneath. In company with the Arctic Skuas following the "Karatta" was a single specimen of the Southern Skua (*Catharacta lonnbergi*) which was easily distinguishable by its uniform blackish brown plumage, its greater size, and the absence of projecting tail-feathers, which are very noticeable in the Arctic Skua.

The Sooty Oyster-catcher (*Haemotopus unicolor*) was seen singly or in twos and threes on several occasions along the rocks and beaches. Once a bird was watched feeding on limpets on the rocks. Evidently the bird would only attempt to prise off the shellfish as they were moving. It would stand for a few seconds looking intently about, and then, ignoring limpets at its feet, would dart over to one perhaps a yard or so away. Only one attempt was made at each limpet, if unsuccessful, the bird looked for another. These birds are locally known as "Red-knees" or "Red-shanks," and are quite plentiful on the tidal flats of American River. \*Spur-winged Plovers (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*) were seen in flocks up to fifteen or twenty in number feeding on the various reefs at low tide. Three times at night the Southern Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus magirostris*) was heard calling behind the township. Single specimens of the grey form of the Reef Heron (*Demigretta sacra*) were seen on four or five occasions along various parts of the coast. A feature of this species is the conspicuous lemon-yellow of the legs and beak in contrast with the slaty-grey of the plumage. When flushed by a boat this species has a habit of flying ahead.

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\* Spur-winged Plover. "In flocks feeding on the various reefs at low tide." This habit has not been mentioned in any of the standard ornithological works nor is any such reference reported in the Volumes of the "S.A. Ornithologist."—Editors.

along the shoreline only a short distance at a time. One morning about 10 o'clock four Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*) were observed circling around over the township. As they circled they were ascending, and in ten minutes' time had attained a great height. Eventually they disappeared in the direction of the mainland. While out in Backstairs Passage in a boat one day a flock of five Purple-crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*) were seen flying across from the mainland to the island, a distance of about ten miles at that part. Several Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*) were seen in the vicinity of Hog Bay River. The rich crimson of the adult birds in flight presented a beautiful sight. Twice when walking along the top of the cliffs towards Kangaroo Head a pair of Rock Parrots (*Neophema petrophila*) was flushed from the short grass growing there. On each occasion the birds flew straight out to sea for some distance before turning to fly parallel with the coastline. Christmas Cove has some bushes and trees growing around its margin and one frequently sees the unusual sight of a Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*) sitting on a rock practically at the water's edge or of Crescent Honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*) or Eastern Spinebills (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) darting out over the sea in pursuit of insects. Each of these Honeyeaters were in numbers. Two males and a female †Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*) were noted on a fence along the road to Cape Willoughby adjoining a fallow paddock. This was thought to be an unusual record, and the birds were followed up for some distance to make sure of their identification. After stalking to within some twenty feet of them this, however, was settled beyond doubt as the red throats of the male birds were clearly seen. There was a flock of about thirty Purple-gaped Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga cratitia*) in a clump of tall gumtrees at Hog Bay River on the first day

† Flame Robin. The period stated is very early for this species to be found in this State. The bird has not been recorded from any of our islands, except Hindmarsh Island in Lake Alexandrina, and has been seen at times migrating north-westwards along the mainland shore of the Coorong. April to August are the usual months for its visits here, and in 35 years there is only one earlier record of its appearance in South Australia. Mr. F. R. Zietz reported the species in 1914 at Mitcham "at the end of March, which is unusually early." Between the April and August period Dr. A. M. Morgan paid four, and Captain S. A. White two, visits to the eastern portion of Kangaroo Island, and neither reported the Flame Robin. Mr. A. Lashmar, who lives in that district, has also not included the species in his lists. The general colour of the male Flame Robin is blackish grey, the sides of the face, ear-coverts and chin blackish grey, and the remainder of the under surface, bill to lower abdomen, orange scarlet, lower abdomen white. The only Robin already recorded from Kangaroo Island is the Scarlet (*P. multicolor*).—Editors.

that this place was visited. The trees were in flower and the birds were very busy among the blossoms and making a great deal of noise. Other birds, such as Crescent Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills, and Yellow-winged Honeyeaters (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*) approaching the trees were driven away. One morning about sunrise, when walking through the sandhills which fringe the beach at Penneshaw, a great deal of scolding was heard. This was thought to come from some Spotted Scrub-Wrens (*Sericornis maculatus*) noticed nearby, but it turned out to be a male Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*), accompanied by an immature bird, trying to drive away five beautiful Firetails (*Zonaeginthus bellus*). The following species, in addition, were noted during this trip:—White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*); ||Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*); Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchrionides*); Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*); Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*); Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*); Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*); Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*); Grey Shrike Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*); White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*); Striated Thornbill (*Acanthiza lineata*); Shy Ground-Wren (*Hylacola cauta*); Superb Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*); Grey-backed Silvereye (*Zosterops halmaturina*); White-eared Honeyeater (*Meliphaga leucotis*); Pipit (*Anthus australis*); *Corvus* sp.; Black-winged Currawong (*Strepera melanoptera*); White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).

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