

Bird Notes from Wilmington District.

By T. Brandon.

I am afraid that the season up here will be a poor one, as by all appearances at present there will be a drought in the district. There are very few birds about, excepting the Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*), which are numerous, and are nesting in almost every available hollow.

Phaps chalcoptera (Common Bronzewing).—On 25/5/1938 two of these Pigeons were noted in some thick acacias near our house, and several days later six were seen. The birds can still be flushed any time one goes amongst the trees. This is the first time I have known this species to stay about here for so long a time.

Ocyphaps lophotes, Crested Pigeon.—On 1/6/1938 several White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) were seen to attack and almost kill one of these Pigeons, and on 7/6/1938 some White-backed Magpies attacked and killed a Crested Pigeon. Later the body was found partly eaten, presumably by the Magpies.

Chenonetta jubata, Maned Goose, commonly known as Wood-Duck.—On 3/9/1938, while riding a push-bicycle past a redgum tree, a flutter of wings was heard, and, on looking up, a bird of this species was seen flying away in the direction of a dam half a mile away. An inspection of the tree revealed a hollow containing twelve eggs covered in down—the eggs and down were very warm. The entrance to the hollow was twenty-five feet from the ground and the depth of the hollow was twenty-one inches—the bottom of the nest was just large enough to hold the eggs. The diameter of the mouth of the hollow seemed too small for a duck as it was between five and six inches across and appeared to be a more suitable hollow for a Galah.

Circus assimilis, Spotted Harrier.—A bird was flushed on 8/9/1938 from a nest in a bushy redgum tree, but the nest was not inspected. This species is not nearly so numerous now as it was this time last year.

Accipiter cirrocephalus, Collared Sparrowhawk.—On 13/7/1938, whilst lunching under a tree, I saw a male bird swoop like a flash on an unsuspecting Thornbill (*Acanthiza*) that was singing merrily in the grass, and carry it up into the next tree, where the Hawk commenced to tear it to pieces. The Hawk flew away after finishing its meal.

Uroaetus audax (Wedge-tailed Eagle).—On 7/7/1938 a trip was made into the ranges in order to find out whether these Eagles had commenced nesting. On approaching a nest an Eagle flushed from it and was joined by its mate near the top of a hill. The pair soared round in great circles. The nest (one from which eggs had been taken last year) was found to be freshly lined with gumleaves and contained three eggs. The eggs were rather small and not so heavily marked as is usual with this species, one egg being almost white. Three nests of this species have been found this season all ready to be laid in, but on being visited several weeks later they were found apparently deserted. This was not caused through interference, as it was possible to see into the nests from the side of the hill. The writer would suggest that the Eagles have not laid owing to adverse seasonal conditions.

Hieraetus morphnoides, Little Eagle.—On 10/8/1938 one of these birds was seen circling over a creek west of the range, and on 6/9/1938 a bird was seen soaring over a creek on the east side of the range—neither showed signs of nesting.

Haliastur sphenurus, Whistling Eagle.—About 10/6/1938 several birds were noted along the Willochra Creek and on 25/6/1938 two new nests were found partly built, but have not been examined since. On 8/7/1938 a nest of this species was found west of the Flinders Ranges and contained little chicks.

Elanus axillaris, Black-shouldered Kite.—On 26/4/1938 a pair was found to have re-lined an old nest of a Magpie (*Gymnorhina*) with gumleaves and three eggs had been laid, and on this date one chick was hatched and one egg was chipped. On 19/5/1938 three chicks nearly fully fledged were in the nest and on 22/5/1938 the chicks were seen sitting up around the edge of the nest. On 29/5/1938 the nest was climbed to and all three chicks flew, but the smallest of the three only flew about 150 yards and was caught for a pet. The nest was found to be full of pellets and in a very bad state. As the captured bird did not seem to get any quieter it was released on 3/6/1938 at the site of the nest. At first it would not fly, but on being thrown into the air took wing and flew to a nearby tree. On 8/6/1938 two young birds were seen sitting on the old nest, and on the 9th three young and one adult bird were flying over the sheds and haystack. These birds were about until recently, but now seem to have obeyed their wandering nature and gone away to some other district. While in captivity the young bird was fed on five mice a day. The mice had only to be put in the cage and as soon as all were quiet the bird would commence eating.

Falco subniger, Black Falcon.—On 6/8/1938 a bird was seen to fly away from near a nest in a redgum tree. On inspection the nest was found to contain three eggs. The bird was back at the nest several days later. This was the same nest as Little Falcons (*Falco longipennis*) used in the two previous years. A dead Black Falcon was found on the ground directly under the nest, and appeared to have been dead for several weeks.

Neophema sp.—On 12/4/1938 a specimen of this genus of Parrots was noted in the acacias near here. On 25/8/1938 several pairs were noted among the bushes by the roadside ten miles from Port Augusta. I was unable to secure a specimen.

Cuculus pallidus, Pallid Cuckoo.—21/4/1938. A bird was seen and heard near the house. On 13/7/1938 a bird was seen

in the Flinders Ranges; and on 17/7/1938 a bird was seen at Booleroo Whim.

Petroica goodenovii, Red-capped Robin. — 11/6/1938. Usually a few females are about, but only lately have any males been noted; there are only odd ones at this date. 11/9/1938. Very few of these Robins are here now. No Scarlet Robins (*P. multicolor*) have been recorded from this district as far as I am aware.

Pachycephala rufiventris, Rufous Whistler. — 7/5/1938.—Several of this species have been seen lately. 1/9/1938.—Ever since May a few of these birds have been about, but at this date they appear to have departed.

Gliciphila albifrons, White-fronted Honeyeater.—11/9/1938. A bird was heard calling in the boxthorn hedge at 7.30 a.m. It called several times. This species has not been heard here since 7/1/1938.

Corvus. — 26/4/1938. Four birds of this genus were shot while eating a lamb, and on being examined three were found to be Ravens (*C. coronoides*) and one a Little Crow (*C. bennetti*). On 19/5/1938 four birds were shot and all were Ravens. On 25/7/1938 four more birds were shot—three were Ravens and one a Little Crow.

Cracticus torquatus, Grey Butcher-Bird (?) (Most likely it would be this species as it is found forty-five miles north-west of Wilmington).—18/7/1938. The bird called in the trees along the Willochra Creek, and on 3/9/1938 a bird called again. These are the second and third occasions upon which a bird was heard, and one call only was heard in each instance.

Gymnorhina tibicen, Black-backed Magpie. — On several occasions while motoring from Booleroo Whim to Booleroo Centre (seven miles), I thought I saw this species, but was not sure until 18/4/1938, when motoring along the same route a look-out was kept and two birds were definitely identified. The species was seen there again on the only occasion that route was used since that date. These are the only records I have of the Black-backed Magpies in this district.

Correction re *Astur fasciatus*, Australian Goshawk—on page 193, line 6 from the bottom of the page—"within a foot" should read "within ten feet."