

MELIPHAGA PLUMULA (YELLOW-FRONTED HONEY-EATER)

By J. NEIL McGILP.

Though infrequently noted in "bird lists" compiled by bird observers in this State, this Honeyeater is to be found in fair numbers in its true habitat. It is found on the foothills and gullies of fairly tall ranges, where it loves to flutter from one eucalypt to another. It shows a slight preference to the localities where grows the broad-leaved Mallee, but is almost as content amongst Red Gums. The writer has noted the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater in the Gawler Ranges, on Eyre Peninsula, the lengthy Flinders Ranges and the Musgrave Ranges in the extreme north-west of the State.

The Mallee scrub has been mentioned as the habitat of the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater, but, although the writer has during many years' hunting in the Mallee been constantly on the look-out for it, he has not seen any sign of it. It would appear that the Mallee records must refer to the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, which is, of course, very plentiful in the Mallee scrubs.

It is quite easy to confuse the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater with its near relative, the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, for the plumage of both species is very similar. The main difference is to be found in that the Yellow-

fronted Honeyeater has not the streaks on the breast and abdomen which occur on the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater. There is also a blackish line in front of the yellow plumes on the Yellow-fronted bird which is not found on the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater. In all other respects the plumage is so identical that the difference cannot be detected by field observation.

The eggs of the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater are possibly as rare as any Australian birds' eggs. The writer has taken but one set. There seemed no reason to suppose that other sets could not be secured, and when the late Dr. Wm. Macgillivray said he had never taken a set and offered a set of the Magnificent Rifle Bird and a set of Australian Manucode, the writer parted with his set. Since 1917 every effort has been made to fill the gap in the McGilp Collection, but neither has a nest been secured nor has any other collector offered the eggs in exchange.

The eggs of the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater are quite distinct from those of the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater. In texture, shape and size the eggs of the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater closely resemble the eggs of the White-plumed Honeyeater. The ground color of the shell is a pale, fleshy buff, this color being more pronounced or deeper on the larger end of the egg, but as the colors gradually merge it cannot be called a zone. There are small flecks and irregular markings of rufous or

chestnut-red scattered sparingly over the surface of the shell.

The writer has seen three nests, two contained two young, and one nest contained the previously mentioned set of two eggs. In each case the nest was suspended between a fork of a leafy drooping branch of broad-leaved Mallee growing on the side of a gully on the foothills of the Flinders Ranges. The nest was rather a deep "honeyeater" type. The rim of the nest was tightly woven over each prong of the slight fork. It was made externally of fine strips of bark and fine dry grass, and lined with rabbits' fur. Cobweb and spiders' cocoons were worked in with the outer material. One nest measured 3 inches in diameter and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, with the egg cavity measuring approximately $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and 2 inches deep. The nest was well concealed, and it was only noted when one bird flew into the Mallee branch to feed the sitting bird.

Dr. A. Chenery, who had some experience with the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater near Port Augusta, informed me that he had found the bird nesting in low saltbushes growing on the foothills of the Flinders Ranges.

Very little has been recorded of the habits and nidification of the Yellow-fronted Honeyeater, and these few notes are written with a desire that bird observers, particularly those in this State, will pay attention to this species should the opportunity to observe them occur.
