

## BIRD NOTES ON THE OLD RECTORY FARM, WILLUNGA, DURING 1944 AND 1945

By OSCAR SYMON.

The Old Rectory Farm overlooks Willunga from the steeply-rising hillsides a mile south of the township. In form, its fifty acres are like two pronounced breasts divided by a comparatively short, shallow gully or sulcus which widens and flattens out in a north-westerly direction on to the lower (northern) boundary which runs about east to west across the raised rim of the Vale of Willunga. There is a spring just below the northern boundary.

The following tentative recordings and observations have been made since April, 1944, when the property was purchased, and deal with birds, both residents and visitors, observed only within the boundaries of this fifty acre area. It is a comparatively warm spot with no frosts; sheltered from the bitter winds that blow from south of east and west; it is well timbered, shrubbed and grassed both with endemic and introduced species; the secluded gully has one of its sides facing north of east. The species and numbers of wintering residents and visitors is, I think, remarkably interesting.

In studying this record the fact that both 1944 and 1945 were drought years, with cold, hard winters, must be taken into consideration. The annual average rainfall would be slightly above 27 inches, of which, according to official data, approximately 21 inches falls on average between April and September.

The dominant eucalypt is the Peppermint Gum (*E. odorata*), which grows in fairly thick groups all over the property; on the stony highland are a number of big Blue Gums (*E. leucoxylon*) and numbers of stunted "pink" or "rock" gums (*E. fasciculosa*). Some Sheoaks (*Casuarina stricta*) and Golden Wattle (*Acacia pyonantha*) are to be seen in association with the others. In the lower part of the gully is a dense old Olive grove of about one acre in area. Still lower are two very big Pines (*Pinus pinea*) about 100 years old and also a fairly old *Pinus insignis*—both heavily coned.

A high, thick Olive hedge surrounds the 1½ acres of house garden on the west and north sides, and in the garden itself are to be found trees (of varying ages) of the Pear, Apple, Quince, Plum, Fig, Loquat, Lemon, Oleander, Garden Fuchsia, English Myrtle, Wistaria, Grape Vine, Tecoma (red), Roses, Pomegranate, Pepper Tree (*Schinus molle*), Tree Lucerne (*Tagasaste*), Olive, Periwinkle (blue), Nasturtium, and two trees of considerable size, both flowering varieties, the identity of which has not yet been communicated to me.

In the north-east corner of the property is a seven-year-old Almond grove (Chellaston, Johnson's Early and Paper-shell varieties) of 500 trees. The gully is flanked by two shallow stony patches where beneath the trees there is a thick stunted coverage of Kangaroo Thorn (*Acacia armata*) and in association scattered plants of Gorse (*Ulex europeus*), South African Box Thorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), and Brier (*Rosa rubiginosa*).

For the rest, this area is open grassland pasture containing Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Shivering Grasses (*Briza* spp.), Brome grasses (3 species), Fescue (*Festuca bromoides*), Barley Grass (*Hordeum murinum*), Hop Clover (*Trifolium procumbens*), Hare's-foot Clover (*T. arvense*), Native Yam (*Microseris scapigera*), Chickweed (*Cerastium*), Groundsel (*Erechtites picridioides*), Parsley Fern (*Cheilanthes tenuifolia*); Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Bulbine bulbosa, *Bartsia viscosa*, *Pimelea* sp., *Halorrhagis* sp., Spider Orchid (*Caladenia leptochila*), *Leptorrhynchus*, Yellow Everlasting (*Helichrysum apiculatum*), *Caesia vittata*, Blue Pimpernel (*Anagallis femina*), Native Soursob (*Oxalis corniculata*), Milk Thistles in abundance, "Scotch" Thistles, odd Star Thistles (Yellow-flowered), Wild Oats, Narrow Leaf Clover, Subterranean Clover, Rye Grass (two species), Cape Weed (*Cryptostemma calendulacea*) and others not yet identified by either Miss C. Eardley, Waite

Institute, or the Department of Agriculture, both of whom have been most helpful.

All parts of the property accessible to a top-dressing machine were top-dressed with superphosphate in 1945, causing prodigious growth.

Throughout 1944 and 1945 notes have been made on the habits and behaviour of the birds recorded hereunder. It is hoped to publish these in a future issue of this journal, when some further facts about the flora, as well as the entomological ones, may be available.

#### NESTING RESIDENTS.

Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*); White-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga penicillata*); Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliphaga novae-hollandiae*); White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*); Blackbird (*Turdus merula*); Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*); House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*); Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), one pair 1945.

#### NON-NESTING RESIDENTS.

(Birds seen and heard on property throughout year, but no nests yet discovered.)

Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*); Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adalaidae*); Red-rumped Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*); Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*); Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*); Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*); Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*); Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae*); Dusky Wood Swallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*); Black-capped Sittella (*Neositta chrysoptera*); Pardalote (*Pardalotus* sp.); Pipit or Groundlark (*Anthus australis*); Raven (*Corvus coronoides*).

#### RESIDENTS DURING WINTER ONLY (APRIL—SEPTEMBER)

Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*); Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*); Fantailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), arrived April 25, 1944; April 3, 1945. Resides almost all the year. Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*); Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*); Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*); Magpie Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*); White-fronted Chat (*Ephianura albifrons*); Grey-backed Silver-

eye (*Zosterops halmaturina*); Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Meliphaga chrysops*); Noisy Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*); Red Wattle Bird (*Anthochaera carunculata*); Little Wattle Bird (*A. chrysoptera*); Red-browed Finch (*Aegintha temporalis*); Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)—in flocks.

#### VISITORS MORE OR LESS REGULAR, BUT MORE NOTICEABLE IN WINTER.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*); White-faced Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*); Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*); Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*); Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*); Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*); Brown Hawk (*F. berigora*); Nankeen Kestrel (*F. cenchroides*); Elegant Parrot (*Neophema elegans*); Budgerigah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*); Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*), July 28 to end of August, 1944, July 30 to August 7, 1945; Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*), June 3 to June 17, 1944, May 3 to June 8, 1945; Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*), August 8-17, 1944, male and female; June 4-5, 1945, 3 males; Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*); Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza chrysoorrhoa*); Superb Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*); Chestnut-eared Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*).

#### SUMMER VISITORS.

Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*); Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*); Musk Lorikeet (*G. concinna*); Little Lorikeet (*G. pusilla*); Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus junereus*); Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*); Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*); Brown Songlark (*Cincloramphus cruralis*); Rufous Songlark (*C. mathewsi*); White-naped Honeyeater (*Melithreptus lunatus*).

#### ODD VISITORS.

Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*), May 20-29, 1945, a pair about the house. Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*); two females or immature birds observed about the house from December 6-11, 1945. Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*), a bedraggled immature or female bird spent August 8, 9, 1945, mostly trying out nectarless Geranium blossoms.