

SOUTHERN RANGE OF THE LITTLE CROW IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

By E. F. BOEHM

The Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*) has been generally regarded as a species inhabiting the dry interior of Australia. In 1942, the present writer(1) gave the general distribution of the species as north of Latitude 32 deg. S., and noted a southward extension of the range in the Mallee areas situated to the east of the Mount Lofty Ranges. No mention was made of its occurrence on Eyre Peninsula, although it was known that Weidenbach(3) had reported it as plentiful from Cowell and the Hundred of Mangalo. A small Crow secured during Capt. S. A. White's collecting trip in the Gawler Ranges is said by him(4) to have snow-white feather bases. The skin is now in the American Museum of Natural History. Details are as follows: No. 674484; adult male; Mt. Ive Tank, Gawler Range; Nov. 11, 1912. Collector: E. R. White [apparently the late Ethel Rosina White].

Mr. Dean Amadon, commenting on the specimen, states (*in lit.* July 12, 1949): "The bases of the feathers seem whiter than in *coronoides* but greyer than in *bennetti*. Is it possible that the feathers are somewhat more white in the young of *coronoides*? The throat hackles of this bird are short, but it is in rather bedraggled plumage and may be immature."

As young Australian Ravens have darker feather-bases than adults, it seems likely that a critical examination of the Gawler Range skin will reveal that it is a Little Crow.

Mr. Tom Brandon has informed me that he and Mr. J. B. Hood collected several sets of eggs of *C. bennetti* and shot birds from the nest at Buckleboo, near Kimba, Eyre Peninsula, late in the winter of 1937. The species is almost certainly distributed throughout the northern districts of Eyre Peninsula and may be expected to occur southward to at least the 15-inch annual isohyet, approximately north of an imaginary line from Venus Bay in the west to Tumbly Bay in the east.

On the margin of the Flinders Ranges, Creek east of the latter town. Along the Willochra Creek and other creeks fringed by

Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and emerging from the Flinders Ranges, near Wilmington, Mr. Brandon has found the species breeding. He considers that the Little Crow represents only about 5 per cent. of the *Corvus* population there, the rest being Ravens. A specimen in my Collection, No. 206, sex ?; Willochra Creek, Wilmington, S.A.; July 8, 1942. Collector: T. Brandon.

The southern range limits of *C. bennetti* along the plains west of the northern portion of the Mount Lofty Ranges are unknown. It may be expected to occur on the northern districts of Yorke Peninsula and the Adelaide Plains north of the Gawler River.

From the Murray Mallee the Little Crow ranges quite unexpectedly southward to the coast at Millicent. Here it inhabits a peculiar coastal strip of open country clad with large grass tussocks and a few Sheoak (*Casuarina stricta*) trees. Mr. Allan Ey records(2) it breeding in the area, and has collected a bird in the locality for the S.A. Museum to confirm his identification.

REFERENCES:

- (1) Boehm, E. F., 1942, "S.A. Orn.," XVI: 10.
- (2) Ey, Allan E., 1944, *Ibid*, XVII: 36.
- (3) Weidenbach, W. W., 1924, *Ibid*, VII: 196.
- (4) White, S. A., 1913, "Emu," XIII: 32.

:o:_____