

CALLS OF THE MUSK DUCK

I have long been puzzled by a high-pitched and rather loud whistling call heard at times along creeks near the River Murray. The note, which may be rendered "chee-ip" or "chee-eep," is of piercing intensity and echoing to give a ventriloquial effect. Although very high-pitched, it is a "thin" call, suggesting that it is uttered by one of the smaller birds, such as a Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo.

One day I heard the whistling call when it was preceded by a loud "kerchoonk," almost like the noise of rowlocks and oars in water. Expecting to see a boat come into view around the lignums on the edge of the stream, imagine my surprise when, instead, an adult drake of *Biziura lobata* (Musk Duck), with a large wattle, appeared making the noise "kerchoonk" with his feet. The bird, while swimming, kicked one foot rearward with great force before placing it in the water again. The call "chee-ip" followed this action, but I was unable to attribute it to the Musk Duck with certainty. However, further opportunities for close observation of Musk Ducks have

established the fact that the whistle was made by them. My experience suggests that the note is made only by birds with a prominent wattle and usually in sheltered spots rather than on open water.

The call is also made at night, especially on calm summer evenings, when both "kerchoonk" and "chee-ip" echo clearly for long distances. The powerful whistling note, which has been referred to recently by Lowe (*Emu*, 50, p. 394), is hardly what one might expect from so large a bird as the Musk Duck.—David Mack, Renmark (December, 1958).