

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLES NEAR LYNDOCH

Two Olive-backed Orioles (*Oriolus sagittatus*) were watched by five observers in the 'Altona Scrub' area, ca. 1.5 miles N.E. of Lyndoch over a period of about 40 minutes during the S.A.O.A. excursion of 4th October, 1970. Other observers were R. F. Brown, C. R. Schnuettgen and R. Trenerry.

A single bird was first seen at about 1030 quietly preening on a horizontal branch of a Blue Gum (*Euc. leucoxydon*). It remained in the same place for about 20 minutes, and the description taken reads:

Upper parts muddy-olive, dark streaks on upper back; dorsal side of tail dark grey, narrow dirty-buff or dirty-white terminal band widening towards outer edges; pale-buffy edges to wing coverts; black streaks on creamy-white belly and breast, extending high up to the throat; bill dark horn; feet and legs horn; very faint stripe above eye; eye 'dark'; inside mouth pink.

This bird eventually flew south about 75 yards and a second bird immediately revealed itself by following it into a grove of Native Pine (*Callitris*). Although closely similar in plumage, the throat of one bird was a little more extensively streaked. Both birds were quite tame and not easily disturbed by observation, but they were surprisingly difficult to pick up again when they moved from one tree to another. Lighting was good and the birds were approached to as close as 40 feet, but their apparent liking for deep shade did not permit any more accurate description of eye colour than 'dark,' i.e. probably dark brown or black. It is unlikely that all observers would have missed red eyes if these

had been present, these being particularly looked for.

All *E. leucoxydon* in the vicinity were heavily infested with skeletoniser caterpillars but the orioles were not seen to eat any. One bird was seen with a grub about an inch long which it dropped, and followed by hopping down on to lower branches of *Callitris*, but lost.

The only song heard was a few nondescript notes, but an imitation of the 'or-i-ole' call whistled by Mr. Brown brought the birds to the tree above his head. One hopped down into the lower branches to investigate the source of the whistles more closely.

Mr. Crouch believes from our description that the birds seen were in a sub-adult plumage, and has suggested that they may have been recently fledged in the area. However they did not appear to be young birds and neither showed any trace of a juvenile gape.

The following Sunday we found a nest similar to one of the Belair nests, which we had examined, in the outer branches of a Blue Gum, about 20 feet from the ground and not far from the first sighting. However a replay of the oriole's call from Mr. Crouch's tape, here and in other parts of the scrub, failed to locate any orioles.

E. L. and M. J. ARTHUR,
20 Angas Rd., Hawthorn, S.A.
(Recd. 19. x. 1970).