

AN UNUSUAL CONCENTRATION OF PREDATORS AT TEA TREE GULLY

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From the 18 to the 22 March 1977 an unusual concentration of predators occurred over the Anstey Hill Reserve and in suburbs adjacent to Tea Tree Gully in the Mount Lofty Ranges. At the time of the concentration it was noticed that there was a sudden increase in the numbers of Hoppers (Acrididae) in the vicinity. Both the Black and Brown Falcons in the concentration were observed taking Hoppers in flight. This involved the falcons in tail-twisting behaviour, probably to enable the bird to achieve stability and manoeuvrability at low speeds. The birds were seen to be taking the Hoppers in their talons and transferring them to their beaks while in flight.

The greatest concentrations of the predators occurred on 18 and 19 March as follows:

Locality: Anstey Hill Reserve, Tea Tree Gully—
34° 50' lat. 138° 43' long. Weather: Fine and warm.

	14.00 hrs.	15.00 hrs.
	March	March
	18	19
Brown Falcon <i>Falco berigora</i>	6	14
Black Falcon <i>Falco subniger</i>	3	3
Black-shouldered Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	1	1
Wedge-tailed Eagle <i>Aquila audax</i>	0	2

J. Needle (pers. comm.), whose home is six km north of the Anstey Hill Reserve, noted the following sightings of Black Falcon in the district during this period.

Date	No. Seen	Location
6 March	1	Tea Tree Gully
8 March	1	Tea Tree Gully
18 March	2	Tea Tree Gully
20 March	3	Tea Tree Gully
20 March	6	Highbury
22 March	1	Tea Tree Gully

A Black Falcon flew into the window of a home in Tea Tree Gully on 19 March 1977, and sustained a broken upper mandible and wing. This bird was treated by a veterinary surgeon, was successfully rehabilitated by the owners of the home and released on 6 May, 1977.

Calls on 18 March to other members of the S.A.O.A. living along the foothills of the Mount Lofty Ranges as far south as Coromandel Valley indicated that the concentration observed was probably confined to the Tea Tree Gully area.

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