

## RECORDS OF THE PAINTED HONEYEATER IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

W. E. MATHESON

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The Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta* occurs in a broad arc extending from Arnhem Land through north Queensland and central New South Wales to south-western Victoria. It is apparently a nomadic species occurring chiefly in inland areas, following the fruiting of mistletoes parasitic on *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia* and *Casuarina* spp. In south-eastern Australia this movement becomes a regular southern migration in October-November, the birds returning northward in early April after breeding (Pizzey and Doyle 1980). It is an irregular visitor to far inland areas.

There are few records of the Painted Honeyeater in South Australia. Pizzey and Doyle (*op. cit.*) stated that it was recorded *ca* 130 km W of Ouyen, Victoria, and "doubtfully in nearby S.A. near Manya". No reference was given for this latter record, but a search of the literature showed that it was probably that of Howe and Burgess (1942). They gave details of a journey from Pinnaroo to nearby Manya, Victoria. Manya is 15 km NNE of Pinnaroo. They did not see the Painted Honeyeater on this occasion but mentioned that it was "only seen once — many years ago at Wattle Flat, now the site of the Carina railway station". However, Carina is in Victoria about 20 km E of Pinnaroo.

There is a record from Curdimurka, 30° 31' S, 137° 06' E, in the Far North (Lendon 1970). This report mentioned that there was no sexual dimorphism in the observed colony, whereas the female is in fact slightly smaller than the male and is duller brownish black above with fewer spots on the flanks (Pizzey and Doyle *op. cit.*). This record is regarded as unsubstantiated because no description was given.

A sight record was made near Bool Lagoon, in the South-East, in April 1978 by Robin Moorhouse (Jaensch and Joseph 1979). A satisfactory description and sketch were given. The bird was observed for two days and was seen from a distance of 10-12 m drinking and bathing under a sprinkler.

On 8 June 1980 the author saw a Painted Honeyeater 12.3 km S of Merty Merty Station, 28° 35' S, 140° 15' E. Merty Merty is on the old Strzelecki track adjacent to the Strzelecki Creek. The field description is as follows:—

A small to medium sized honeyeater with a black head, white throat and breast, a short reddish bill, and a white spot behind the reddish eye. Primaries gold, upper back black.

The bird was perched 15 m away in a dead Marpoo *Acacia ligulata* where it remained in view for about five minutes before flying away.

A recent observation close to the North-East of South Australia was made by R. Lovell (pers.

comm.) who saw them feeding on mistletoe in Mulga *Acacia aneura* at Cuddapan Station 25° 40' S, 131° 30' E in July, 1977. Cuddapan is 60 km from South Australia.

Because of their nomadic movements Painted Honeyeaters can be expected to occur in inland South Australia from time to time. As Painted Honeyeaters feed preferentially on mistletoe nectar and berries, the most likely inland areas in which to find them in South Australia are probably watercourses lined with River Red

7 *Blue Gum Court, Athelstone, S.A. 5076.*

Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* or Coolabah *E. microtheca*, or in Mulga or Black Oak *Casuarina cristata* scrub, where these trees are themselves parasitized by mistletoe.

#### REFERENCES

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Pizzey, G. and Doyle, R. 1980. A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Collins: Sydney.