

RANGE EXTENSIONS OF GILBERT'S WHISTLER

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This note records two range extensions of Gilbert's Whistler *Pachycephala inornata* in the eastern parts of its South Australian distribution. The records presented will be briefly discussed in relation to the sources of the birds involved.

THE RECORDS

A.

A pair was seen by RK and David Harper on 12 and 15 April 1981 in the western foothills of the Mount Lofty Ranges, 16 km NE of the centre of Adelaide. The locality is immediately south of the Cobbler Creek and adjoins the Adelaide suburb of Salisbury East. The male was generally grey-brown on the back and grey on the head and neck; the wing feathers were brownish, edged dark grey and the tail was a darker grey; the black of the lores extended to just behind the eye; the underparts were generally greyish-white with a rich rufous throat patch and a pale rufous wash on the pale buff undertail-coverts; a conspicuous white shoulder marking was also seen. The female was similar but uniformly grey, having very pale rufous lores and a very conspicuous whitish eye-ring. Both birds had dark eyes and blackish legs and bills. Their flight was strong and undulating.

The habitat in the vicinity of the sighting consists of disturbed open scrubland dominated by Peppermint Box *Eucalyptus odorata* with clumps of several species of *Acacia* and an extensive grass cover. The birds were seen feeding in the canopies of mature *E. odorata*, in *Acacia* especially Kangaroo Thorn *A. paradoxa* and in the long grass. They were once seen feeding with three female-phase Golden Whistlers *P. pectoralis* and a female-phase Rufous Whistler *P. rufiventris*. They were several times attacked by White-plumed Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus penicillatus*. The male *P. inornata* was at times very vocal.

B.

G. B. Ragless and LJ saw one *P. inornata* in the plumage of an adult male in the south-western sector of Bangham Conservation Park on 2 and 3 November 1980. This locality is in the upper South-East of South Australia, ca. 15 km NNW of Frances. The bird was clearly a whistler and identification was based on the bird's generally grey plumage, dark red-brown throat, black lores and typical rich song. At

one stage the bird was seen sitting on (? building) an inaccessible nest in a sapling Brown Stringybark *Eucalyptus baxteri* five metres in height.

R. Jaensch visited this locality on 8 December 1980 but did not record *P. inornata*. LJ did not record it when previously camped at this exact locality in December 1976, December 1979, and January, February, March, April, August and September 1980. Mrs C. Houston observed birds in this district between 1978 and 1980 but did not record *P. inornata*.

The habitat in the vicinity of the sighting was low woodland dominated by *E. baxteri* six to eight metres in height with a moderately dense understorey of *Callistemon* sp. two to three metres in height, *Hibbertia* sp., *Banksia marginata* and other shrubs typical of *E. baxteri* scrub in the upper South-East of South Australia. This habitat is floristically atypical but structurally suitable for *P. inornata*. Immediately south of the vicinity of the sighting is a thin strip of open Blue Gum *E. leucoxylon* woodland which, in turn, adjoins pasture with scattered remnant *E. leucoxylon*.

DISCUSSION

In the vicinity of the Salisbury East sighting, RK has noted the seasonal occurrences of Rufous and Golden Whistlers, the former occurring through late summer to winter, the latter from autumn to winter. It is not known whether *P. inornata* also occurs there seasonally but one should consider the possibility that birds from the nearby and little known coastal population of *P. inornata* move to the Mount Lofty Ranges, even if only irregularly. (This population has been occasionally recorded in scrub on the eastern shores of St. Vincent's Gulf between Port Wakefield and Port Gawler—see Condon and Rix 1936, Terrill and Rix 1950, Beruldsen 1958 and SAOA 1977).

The Bangham sighting, on the other hand, was made some 230 km S of Pinnaroo, the nearest known mallee locality at which the moderately common mallee population of *P. inornata* is resident (see McGilp and Parsons 1937, McGilp 1943 and Condon 1969). Hatch (1977) did not record *P. inornata* at Comet Bore roughly half-way between Pinnaroo and Bordertown but noted a report from "some km to the west [of Comet Bore] in *Callitris* scrub". Attwood

(1977) did not record it at Mt Rescue Conservation Park although the habitat between Mt Rescue and Comet Bore is continuous. N. Reid (pers. comm.) recorded an adult male *P. inornata* on Flairdale Station 12 km W of Keith on 26 and 31 August 1978. The habitat there was sandplain heath up to 1.5 m high with scattered large *Hakea* bushes and Pink Gums *E. fasciculosa*. However, there are no previously published records of *P. inornata* in the South-East of South Australia (see, for example, Attiwill 1972) and the lack of other sightings at Bangham suggests that the bird seen there was a vagrant.

Information on the patterns, if any, of the movements of *P. inornata*, particularly about the fringes of its range, should assist in clarifying our understanding of the range extensions reported in this note.

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