

BREEDING OF THE RAINBOW BEE-EATER ON KANGAROO ISLAND

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INTRODUCTION

There is only one previous record of the Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* on Kangaroo Island (Brook 1962). This note documents breeding of the species on the Island.

In the season of 1979-1980, I found three nests in a section of the Kelly Hill Conservation Park known as Grassdale, this area being in the south-west part of Kangaroo Island, 13 kilometres E of Rocky River HS. A rough track several kilometres in length leads south into Grassdale from the South Coast Road. The nesting habitat was sclerophyll woodland the dominant trees being Sugar Gums *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*, Pink Gums *E. fasciculosa*, Blue Gums *E. leucoxydon*, and Coastal Mallee. *E. diversifolia* with the understorey comprised mainly of *Banksia marginata* and *B. ornata*, *Acacia pycnantha* and *A. paradoxa*, *Melaleuca decussata*, *M. uncinata* and *M. lanceolata*.

THE NESTS

On 10 November 1979, two pairs of Bee-eaters were seen on the Grassdale track, one being at the southern end of the track and the other only 500 m from the South Coast Road.

Both pairs were seen on each of several visits during the following week and their (two) nests were located on 17 November. The nest of the pair at the end of the track was in a burrow in relatively flat ground in firm white sandy soil while the other pair's nest near the South Coast Road was a burrow in a low sandy bank at the edge of the track. A third nest was found midway between these two nests at the edge of the track in exposed sand which may have offered easy digging.

SUBSEQUENT OBSERVATIONS

On 7 January immature Bee-eaters were sighted at all three nest sites. On 3 March 1980 C. Baxter and I saw five immatures near my residence which is ca 6 km E of the Grassdale area. Later that day a flock of 21 Bee-eaters comprised of adults and immatures assembled on power wires in front of my residence. My last sighting for the season was on 25 March when two immatures accompanied by two adults were seen flying near my residence.

REFERENCES

- Brook, Phillip, 1962. Notes on Kangaroo Island (S.A.) birds. *Emu* 62:59-60.

Kelly Hill Caves Conservation Park, Private bag 38, Kingscote, S.A. 5223.