

## A GREY WAGTAIL IN SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA

G. J. SARA

Received 24 April 1981; accepted 26 June 1981

The Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* is a migratory species found in Europe, Asia, India, Africa, Alaska and islands to the north of Australia (King *et al.* 1975). Published Australian records are from Innisfail (Gill 1970) and on the Atherton Tableland 35 km NE of Atherton (Cameron 1980), both of these localities being in north-eastern Queensland. This note describes an occurrence of the species in southern Australia.

On 25 March 1980 I noticed a bird the size of a Richards Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* foraging along the edge of a stream at Waterfall Gully, 8 km E of Adelaide. The bird pecked at the ground while walking along the water's edge and continually wagged its long tail up and down. It was nervous and flew away when disturbed by a large group of people. At 18:00 on the same day I saw what was presumably the same bird in the same area. Approaching to within eight metres of the bird, I was able to obtain the following description:

Eye-brow white; breast white with a faint tinge of yellow which became brighter closer to the abdomen and undertail coverts bright lemon yellow; wings dark grey with several thin white bars on the primaries; back nape and crown light grey; rump yellow.

The bird then flew to a pile of rocks in the water near the waterfall. It remained there on a partially submerged rock in the last patch of sunlight, still bobbing its tail up and down. I saw the bird in this position on the evening of 27 March. On 28 March it was first seen at 17:40 flying southwards at a height of about

64 Wallala Ave., Parkholme, S.A. 5043.

15 metres above the creek bed. It landed and foraged at the water's edge, again bobbing its tail up and down.

The above description, the bird's continual up and down bobbing of its tail and my previous observation of a similar bird in Sri Lanka a few months before led me to conclude that this bird was a Grey Wagtail. This constitutes the first record of this species in South Australia and southern Australia in general.

Additional descriptive details were noted by R. Jaensch on 29-31 March:

Forehead, face, ear-coverts pale brown; tail black with conspicuous white outer edges and almost as long as body; bill dark; legs pinkish-brown.

It is interesting to note that another unusual sighting, that of a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* recorded 160 km N of Adelaide by Pedler (1977), was also made in the month of March. Perhaps, as Pedler suggested for the Barn Swallow, the Grey Wagtail seen at Waterfall Gully had been disorientated by cyclones while on its northward migratory flight from New Guinea where it regularly occurs (Slater 1974) or even from northern Australia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Shane Parker and Leo Joseph for their help in preparing this article.

## REFERENCES

- Cameron, S. M. 1980. Grey Wagtail in north Queensland. *Sunbird* 11:44-45.  
 Gill, H. B. 1970. Grey Wagtail in northern Queensland. *Emu* 70:141-142.  
 King, B., Woodcock, M. and Dickinson, E. C. 1975. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins: Sydney.  
 Pedler, L. P. 1977. A Barn Swallow in southern Australia. *S. Aust. Orn.* 27:256-257.  
 Slater, P. 1974. *A Field Guide to Australian Birds. Volume II Passerines*. Rigby: Adelaide.