

A SPECIMEN RECORD OF THE TORRESIAN CROW FROM ERINGA

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The Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* has been recorded in South Australia only in the far North-West, with records from Ernabella, Wilu Wiluru, Moorilyanna Soak, Wantapella Swamp and Granite Downs (S.A. Parker, pers. comm.). In July 1977 I identified Torresian Crows by their calls at Eringa WH on Lindsay Creek, Hamilton Stn (Badman 1979). Eringa (26° 17'S, 134° 43'E) is 155 km NNW of Oodnadatta, and 140 km

ENE of Granite Downs, the locality of the previous most easterly confirmed record in South Australia.

I did not record Torresian Crows during a subsequent visit to Eringa in March 1978, but on 2 June 1980, I again heard them at Eringa and Deba WHs. At least two adults were present and one or two immatures. On the following day I collected a specimen (S. Aust. Mus. B33165). It was an immature; iris

colour was light brown and total length was 525 mm.

The Torresian Crows at Eringa in June 1980 appeared territorial, frequenting only its eastern end and two kilometres downstream to Deba WH. Even when followed up they would not fly past a point about one third of the way along from the eastern end of Eringa WH but would circle and fly back downstream. Australian Ravens *C. coronoides* were calling at the western end of Eringa WH on 2 June 1980, but not at the eastern end. The Little Crow *C. bennetti* was not recorded here during this visit, but I have recorded both Australian Ravens and Little Crows at Eringa during previous visits.

On 23 April 1981 I again visited Lindsay Creek and identified four Torresian Crows at Agunta WH five kilometres downstream from Eringa WH. Two were immatures with brown irides, one was an adult with white irides, and although the fourth bird was not seen closely it was probably another adult.

The habitat at Lindsay Creek would seem to be ideally suited to the Torresian Crow. Pizzey and Doyle (1980) give this bird's habitat preference in Central Australia as "taller timber along watercourses". The waterholes on Lindsay Creek are almost permanent and are surrounded by large River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Coolibahs *E. microtheca* and Gidgea *Acacia cambagei*. Although the creek is well timbered, the surrounding country consists of open, chenopod-covered, gibber plains, with some hilly country to the north. Eringa, Deba and Agunta are only three of a series of semi-permanent waterholes along this creek and, because of the hardness of the catchment area, would be refilled after a lighter fall of rain than most waterholes in this area.

It seems likely that at least one breeding pair is resident on Lindsay Creek. I did not look as far downstream as Agunta WH on every visit. This is a region seldom visited by present-day ornithologists.

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On 25 August 1980, while camped with the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia in the Great Victoria Desert at the Serpentine Lakes near the West Australian border, I again identified Torresian Crows. Two were seen on the Western Australian side of the border near Tjidilchurra Rockhole. The area near this permanent water source was very open, but large Marble Gums *Eucalyptus gongylocarpa* were growing less than one kilometre away together with Mallee *Eucalyptus* spp, Mulga *Acacia aneura*, *A. brachystachia*, *Dodonaea* sp., *Cassia* sp. and with an understorey of *Triodia basedowii*. These birds were readily distinguished from the Little Crows which were present throughout the desert, by their noticeably larger size as well as by their calls.

Dr G. M. Storr (*in litt.* 11 December 1980) pointed out that the occurrence of the Torresian Crow in the Great Victorian Desert in Western Australia is well established. The bird is sparsely distributed, usually in pairs, and restricted to the better country: taller trees around rockholes and soaks, while the more numerous and gregarious Little Crow is less specialized (see Rowley 1970).

The Serpentine Lakes are south of the Torresian Crow's known South Australian range. Even though the bird has not yet been recorded near the Lakes in South Australia I think it likely that it could be found where suitable habitat occurs around the few rockholes in the un-named Conservation Park. However these places are most inaccessible as they are surrounded by dense Mulga and Mallee scrub, with many sandridges and have no access roads. Dr. Storr also pointed out that a search of some of the 'better' dongas on the Nullarbor Plain may reveal Torresian Crows.

REFERENCES

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