

A FURTHER SIGHTING OF THE WHITE-BELLIED CUCKOO-SHRIKE IN THE UPPER MURRAY REGION

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I have previously recorded a sighting of the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* from the Upper Murray in South Australia (Jaensch 1980). That observation was of a single bird seen on 25 May 1977 in River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* forest beside the main channel of the Murray River, 11 km ENE of Berri. A single White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike was subsequently seen on 7 April 1980 in Black Box *E. largiflorens* with Cooba *Acacia stenophylla* understorey on the south-western side of Hart Lagoon, 2.5 km WNW of Waikerie and 60 km W of the previous locality. A field description of this bird follows:

Black mask from bill to eye which also curled just behind eye to outline pale grey crescent. Throat and abdomen off-white; undertail coverts clean white. Upper chest uniform light grey; mid-chest faintly barred with darker grey. Primaries, secondaries and some scapulars dark grey or black with light grey fringes; greater wing coverts grey with lighter fringes. Tail dark grey to black above, paler underneath; rest of upperparts, including rump, grey. Bill black, eye dark.

The bird seemed smaller and more robust than a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *C. novae-hollandiae* and it did not shuffle its wings or

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tail on alighting, a common habit of *C. novae-hollandiae*. It was actively procuring insects and green caterpillars from the foliage and bark of both the Box and Cooba. One caterpillar, at least as long as the bird's bill, was repeatedly bashed against a branch before it was swallowed. The Cuckoo-shrike wiped its bill on the branch after this incident.

Although the habitats differ for the two observations, the second bird was within one kilometre of Red Gums and certainly within the narrow confines of the partly-wooded floodplain of the Murray River. My earlier suggestion (*op. cit.*) that the species may use the floodplain as a migration route to the west could also be applied to this second observation. That is, the date of the sighting again falls within the periods of reports from the Adelaide and Langhorne Creek districts (February to September). Small numbers of this species could easily escape notice for several months in the extensive riverine woodland of the Upper Murray as there are few observers in this region.

REFERENCES

- Jaensch, R. P. 1980. White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike in the Upper Murray. *S. Aust. Orn.* 28:109.

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