

FURTHER NOTES ON BIRDS OF THE GAWLER RANGES

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INTRODUCTION

Since Paton's (1975) review of the Gawler Ranges avifauna, Finch (1974) and Joseph (1975) have described sightings of the Little Woodswallow *Artamus minor* and the Painted Firetail *Emblema pictum* respectively from the eastern extremity of the Ranges. Parker (1980) has discussed the early specimen record of the Speckled Warbler *Sericornis sagittatus* from Coralbignie in the southern Ranges, and suggested that it was most likely a mis-identified *Calamanthus Sericornis fuliginosus*. In this article we record some additional species for the Ranges and present further sightings to amplify Paton's (1975) species-accounts. We also take the opportunity to record observations from the vicinity of lakes Gairdner, Acraman and Everard and from the easternmost Barton Sandhills where they abut and extend into Lake Everard station. These dunes, an integral part of the Great Victoria Desert (Black and Badman 1983, Parker *et al.* 1979) contain a varied plant cover including mallee tall shrubland with porcupine grass *Triodia irritans* and a variety of desert shrubs as an understorey. They are also represented in the Gawler Ranges on Moonaree station and south of Hiltaba, Yardea and Paney stations.

The observations reported afresh in this article were made on trips as follows:

1. Iron Knob, Corunna, Nonning, Yardea, Minnipa; A. F. Lees and LJ; 22-25 April 1978.
2. Iron Knob, Corunna, Nonning, Yardea, Moonaree, Lake Everard, Moonaree, Yardea, Minnipa; A. F. Lees, R. P. Jaensch and LJ; 6-9 October 1978.
3. Iron Knob, Corunna, Nonning, Moonaree, Lake Everard HS, Childara Rockhole, Nalara Rocks (= 13 km SW of Childara RH), Yarna, Lake Acraman, Yardea, Scrubby Peak, Minnipa, Paney, Thurlga, Nonning, Corunna; A. B. and J. B. Cox; 13-20 October 1978.
4. Iron Knob, Corunna, Nonning, Yardea, Hiltaba, Lake Everard HS, Childara RH, Nalara Rocks and return *via* Scrubby Peak, Paney, Buckleboo; L. and J. Pedler, J. Reid, R. Kernot and LJ; 5-9 January 1982.
5. Scrubby Peak HS, Peterby Yards (= ca 12 km NE of Scrubby Peak HS), Pine Lodge, Minnipa; J. Reid and L. Edington; 15-18 February 1982.
6. Iron Knob, Corunna, Nonning, Mount Ive, Yardea, Yarna, Yardea, Donaldson's Dam (= ca 5 km S of Sisters Tanks), Nonning; L. and J. Pedler; 11-13 August 1982.

In addition, short trips were made to Corunna Gorge on 10-12 January 1975, 15-16 February 1975 and 23-25 April 1976. Observers on these trips included L. Pedler, J. B. Cox, J. Reid, LJ and others. AB visited Buckleboo and Coralbignie on 11 July 1982.

In the Annotated List below, the abbreviations C, W, S, H and P have been used to introduce summaries of observations published by, respectively, Chenery (1903) who visited the Ranges in August 1902, White (1913) (August-September 1912), Sutton (1923) (August-September 1923), Hall (1974) (March-April 1965) and Paton (1975) (October 1972, May and August 1973).

Figure 1 shows the general location of the Gawler Ranges and localities mentioned in the present article and by the earlier authors cited above. Additional places referred to in the text but not on Figure 1 are listed in the Gazetteer.

ANNOTATED LIST

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Not previously recorded in the Ranges. One, 39 km N of Pondana Dam, 8 October 1978.

PACIFIC HERON *Ardea pacifica*
Not previously recorded. Single birds at Roan Dam (= 9 km W of Lake Everard HS), 15 October 1978, Childara RH, 16 October 1978 and on dam south of Yardea HS, 19 October 1978.

WHITE-FACED HERON
Ardea novaehollandiae
P: Artiming Dam and Nonning.
Single birds 7 km E of Lake Everard HS, 7 January 1982 and Yardea, 19 October 1978.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*
The basis of Condon's (1969) recording of this species in the Gawler Ranges is unknown (Parker *et al.* 1979). One, 2 km S of Yardea, 9 October 1978.

PINK-EARED DUCK
Malacorhynchus membranaceus
P: Angle Swamp. No other records.
Two, Yardea Dam, 22 April 1978.

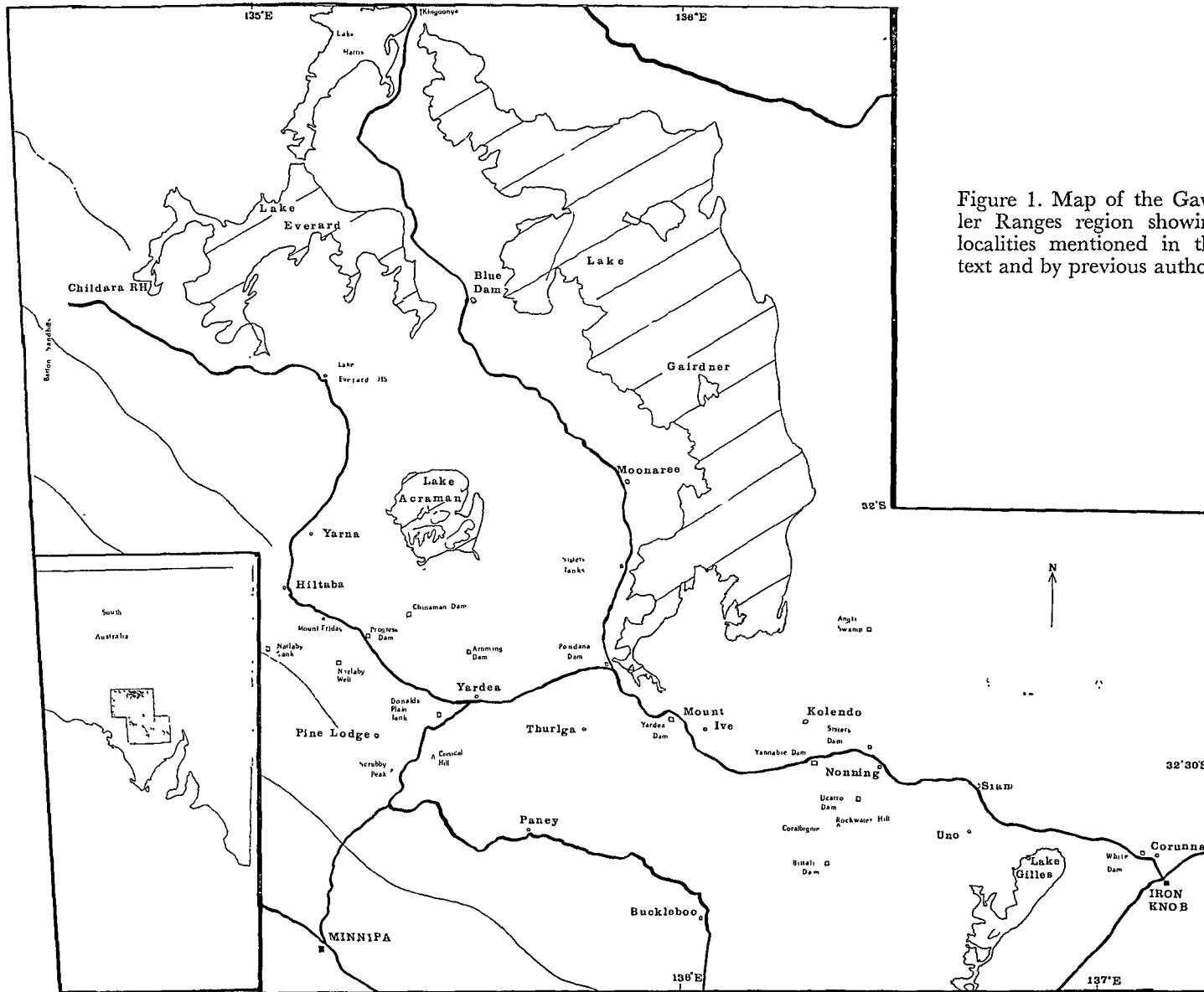


Figure 1. Map of the Gawler Ranges region showing localities mentioned in the text and by previous authors

HARDHEAD *Aythya australis*

P: Angle Swamp, Ucarro Dam and Fresh Water Swamp.

Two, 18 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October, 1978 and one, 20 km W of Lake Everard HS, 15 October 1978.

WHISTLING KITE *Haliastur sphenurus*

S: Nonning. No other records.

Two, over open mallee on sandhills S of Moonaree, 14 October 1978.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

Not previously recorded. Pair seen on all visits to Corunna Gorge.

PAINTED BUTTON-QUAIL *Turnix varia*

Not previously recorded. Three, 5 km E of Scrubby Peak HS, 15 February 1982 (see Pedler 1982 for further details).

LITTLE BUTTON-QUAIL *Turnix velox*

C: dried egg shell found; no further details.

One at each of: 5 km S of Scrubby Peak, 9 January 1982; 3 km S of Yardea, 6 January 1982; in thick sandy heath to the west of Scrubby Peak, 16 February 1982. Two, 8 km NW of Progress Dam, 7 January 1982.

Cox (1974) wrote: "128 Little Quail *Turnix varia*. [sic.]. Common in the Gawler Ranges between Siam and Nonning on 6 January 1973". Although *T. varia* is the Painted Button-quail and not this species, Cox was presumably referring to *T. velox*, for 128 is the number given to *T. velox* in Condon's (1969) *Handlist*.

LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER*Pluvialis dominica*

Not previously recorded. One, 8 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October 1982. Reid (1980) recorded this species at Cariewerloo, ca 35 km NNE of Corunna.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*

Not previously recorded. Single birds seen at Yardea Dam, 22 April 1978; 14 km N of Minnipa, 24 April 1978; 6 km W of Nonning, 7 October 1978 and 18 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October 1978.

RED KNOT and GREAT KNOT

Calidris canutus and *C. tenuirostris* respectively

Reid (1980) cited records of both Knot species from Cariewerloo in the extreme northeast of the Gawler Ranges region. As these records cannot be substantiated at the species level (R. Swaby, pers. comm.) they are best simply regarded as "Knot sp. (? or spp.)".

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER*Calidris acuminata*

P: Artiming Dam.

One, White Dam, 7 October 1978 and four and five, 8 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 and 15 October 1978, respectively.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Not previously recorded. One 18 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October 1978 and one, 9 km W of Lake Everard HS, 15 October 1978.

COMMON BRONZEWING*Phaps chalcoptera*

S: Wipipippee Rocks, Donald's Plain.

H: Nonning.

P: Between Lake Acraman and Lake Gairdner, S of Yardea, Nonning and 25 km N of Angle Swamp.

One, 11 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978 and ca one hundred seen coming to drink at dawn at the large granite outcrop (1 km × 0.5 km) of Nalara Rocks on 8 January 1982. Only one was seen at this locality on 17 October 1978. Those seen in January 1982 were "drinking" from oozing mud at one rockhole. Elsewhere on the outcrop there was only one rock pool, ca 0.5 m in diameter and 15 cm deep.

PURPLE-CROWNED LORIKEET*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*

S: Coralbignie, Weetara and Yarrana Tanks.

P: Pair S of Yardea, Bittali Dam.

Eight, 3 km NW of Progress Dam, 6 January 1982.

COCKATIEL *Nymphicus hollandicus*

P: Nonning, Bittali Dam, Sisters Dam, 25 km N of Angle Swamp.

Several, 7 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978; one flushed from a nest with two eggs, 10 km NW of White Dam, 7 October 1978.

BUDGERIGAR *Melopsittacus undulatus*

H: Lake Acraman.

P: Yardea, Nonning.

Not recorded by White (1913) or Sutton (1923) *pace* Paton (1975).

Two, Chinaman Dam, exploring hollow, 19 October 1978. Also seen in October 1978 at Corunna, Siam and 20 km W of Lake Everard HS.

BLUE-WINGED PARROT*Neophema chrysostoma*

No previous records. One ca five kilometres NW of Mt Ive HS, 12 August 1982. The following notes on this sighting supplied by L. Pedler (*in litt.*): seen on ground in sunlight at 20 m, the bird was a very dull, olive-green immature *Neophema* with no face markings and pale lemon-yellow belly (seen in flight). Tinkling calls characteristic of *N. chrysostoma* heard clearly and formed main basis of identification. Flushed from saltbush and seen to land in a Western Myall *Acacia papyrocarpa*.

We note that Chenerly (1903) listed the very similar Elegant Parrot *N. elegans* between Port

Augusta and Yardea but gave no accompanying details of description or locality. There are very few records of *N. elegans* on Eyre Peninsula (e.g. Eckert 1972, Cox 1974) and only one other from close to the Gawler Ranges (specimens in the South Australian Museum, near Pinkawillinie Conservation Park, between 14 and 17 April 1979). Possibly, Chenery misidentified the Blue-winged Parrot which does disperse to Eyre Peninsula after breeding (Baxter and Parker 1981).

SCARLET-CHESTED PARROT

Neophema splendida

P: One record, no locality given. Mr R. Ellis who made the record has informed us (pers. comm.) that the locality was in sandhill mallee well to the south-west of Lake Everard HS.

Single female-phase birds were seen on 7 January 1982 at 2 and 4 km N of Progress Dam at approximately the same time and therefore were most likely separate individuals. Although seen briefly, their clear yellow underparts and blue foreheads and facial regions were seen well; the call of one bird was distinctive.

BLACK-EARED CUCKOO

Chrysococcyx osculans

C: Listed, but no details.

S: Ucarro Dam, Coralbignie, Wipipippe Rocks, Donald's Plain, Yartoo and Narlaby Tanks.

Three, saltbush plain at mouth of Corunna Gorge, 7 October 1978; two, in mallee 11 km S of Lake Everard HS, 16 October 1978 and one at Lake Acraman, 18 October 1978. Single birds seen at 15 km E of Uno, 8 km NW of Mt Ive HS, Pondana Dam, 32 km NW of Progress Dam and Yardea Dam, 11-13 August 1982.

AUSTRALIAN OWLET-NIGHTJAR

Aegotheles cristatus

S: Whipstick Creek near Nonning.

P: Nonning.

Heard at Nalara Rocks, 15-17 October 1978, 30 km E of Yardea Dam, 6 January 1982, and 2 km N of Progress Dam, 7 January 1982. Single birds seen at Nalara Rocks, 8 January 1982 and at Scrubby Peak, 8 and 9 January 1982. Two nests in mallee ca 30 km N of Pondana Dam, 8 October 1978.

RED-BACKED KINGFISHER

Halcyon pyrrhopygius

H: Lake Acraman.

P: Thuriga and N of Yardea.

Nest in dam, 3 km S of Pondana Dam, 8 October 1978. Also seen at ca 10 km S of L. Everard HS, Nalara Rocks, Yarna, Lake Acraman, Siam, Yardea HS, ca 10 km NW of White Dam and near Moonaree HS, October 1978.

WHITE-BACKED SWALLOW

Cheramoeca leucosternum

S: Corunna, Ucarro Dam, Coralbignie, Angle Swamp, Yartoo, Narlaby Tanks.

P: Artiming Dam.

Two at 10 km W of Yardea Dam, 6 January 1982 and single birds at each of: 29 km N of Hiltaba, 8 January 1982, 3.5 km E of Yardea Dam, 6 January, 1982; Lake Acraman, 18 October 1978 and 2 km N of Scrubby Peak, 18 February 1982.

FAIRY MARTIN *Cecropis ariel*

C: Noted nests, no further details.

W: Corunna.

Several with Tree Martins *C. nigricans*, 10 km NW of White Dam, 7 October 1978. Old nests found in the ruins of a chimney, 30 km E of Yardea Dam, 6 January 1982.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Noted by all previous observers in the Gawler Ranges.

Nest with three eggs in narrow strip of grassland at edge of Nalara Rocks, 15-17 October 1978. Surrounding habitat is dense mallee on sandhills.

SOUTHERN SCRUB-ROBIN

Drymodes brunneopygia

S: Coralbignie.

Single birds seen at: 5 km S of Scrubby Peak, 16 February 1982 and at Scrubby Peak itself, 16-17 February 1982. Noted to be very common at the latter locality.

One in interdunal flat vegetated with *Heterodendron*, *Dodonaea* and *Cassia*, 9 km SW of Childara RH, 15 October 1978; specimen taken for South Australian Museum (B31688). Also known from Yumbarra Conservation Park north of Ceduna (P. Bird, pers. comm.). These records are presently the known northern and western distribution limits of this species in South Australia.

WESTERN YELLOW ROBIN

Eopsaltria griseogularis

S: Whipstick Creek near Nonning, Donald's Plain.

P: Bittali Dam.

The most northerly record in the State is from "a few miles NW of Kychering" (= Wynbring — McGilp 1949). There are specimens in the South Australian Museum from Yumbarra Conservation Park north of Ceduna. Recent records serve to fill in the known range of this bird in the region.

Several, 2-3 km N and NW of Progress Dam, 6 and 7 January 1982; two and one, ca 10 km SW of Childara RH, 8 January 1982 and 17

October 1978 respectively; 5+, 2 km N of Scrubby Peak, 18 February 1982.

JACKY WINTER *Microeca leucophaea*

Widespread in the Gawler Ranges.

Pair with partially constructed nest in sandhills between Childara RH and Nalara Rocks, 16 October 1978.

GOLDEN WHISTLER

Pachycephala pectoralis

Paton (1975) cited the only observation of this species in the Gawler Ranges in black oak and mallee, 25 km N of Angle Swamp in August 1973. The bird seen was in female-phase plumage (J. B. Paton, pers. comm.). On the grounds of distribution and habitat, we consider this bird more likely to have been a female-phase Gilbert's Whistler *P. inornata*, a moderately common species in the Gawler Ranges. The nearest records of *P. pectoralis* are from west of Pinkawillinie Conservation Park and south of Paney (Pedler, in prep.).

RESTLESS FLYCATCHER *Myiagra inquieta*

Widespread in the Gawler Ranges.

Adults with two young ca 10 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978; two, 8 km SW of Childara RH, 8 January 1982.

CHESTNUT QUAIL-THRUSH

Cinlosoma castanotum

C: Listed but no further details.

W: Donald's Plain and extreme western end of the Ranges.

S: Donald's Plain.

One immature male and an adult, the latter on a nest with two eggs in a *Triodia* tussock, on a sand dune in mallee, 7 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978. Six in mallee with low shrubs, ca 30 km N of Pondana Dam, 8 October 1978. One, in mallee-bluebush, Buckleboo, 11 July 1982.

CINNAMON QUAIL-THRUSH

Cinlosoma cinnamomeum

W: Pair on side of a *Triodia*-covered hill near shores of Lake Gairdner.

P: One, presumed to be this species, near Angle Swamp.

Two males, 10 km W of Yardea Dam, 6 January 1982. Two, 10 km S of Sisters Tanks, 13 August 1982.

SPLENDID FAIRY-WREN

Malurus splendens callainus

S: Ucarro Dam.

P: Pine Lodge, Lake Gairdner, Nonning, Coralbignie, Rockwater Hill and Mt Friday.

Between 14 and 20 October 1978, parties were seen at: Yardea, south of Scrubby Peak, near Thurlga, south of Lake Everard HS and between Childara RH and Nalara Rocks. In

January and February 1982 parties were recorded at: 2 km N of Progress Dam, 14 km SE of Hiltaba and in the Scrubby Peak-Pine Lodge area.

THICK-BILLED GRASSWREN

Amytornis textilis

S: One kilometre N of Nonning.

P: 15 km SW of Nonning.

Chenery collected specimens at Nonning and Mount Ive (Parker 1972). The specimens taken by White and referred to by Parker (1972) and Paton (1975) were taken at Myall Creek, beyond the Gawler Ranges proper. Cox (1974) recorded this species at Corunna and near Uno, and Reid (1980) reported parties including a juvenile from ca 15 km W of Cariewerloo HS in the extreme north-east of the Gawler Ranges area. One, between Corunna HS and Iron Knob, in saltbush, 24 April 1978.

SHY HYLACOLA *Sericornis cautus*

Not previously recorded in the Ranges. We suggest, however, that the record of the Spotted Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis maculatus* from Pine Lodge in Paton (1975) was based on a mis-identification of this similar form in view of the anomalous habitat reported ("shrubs" versus the coastal mangroves that are typical for the local populations of *S. f. maculatus*) and the large, inland extension of range that this record would constitute.

Single birds or pairs at gorge 6 km S of Scrubby Peak, 9 January 1982 and 15 and 16 February 1982. Single birds and several pairs recorded at and near Nalara Rocks 17 October 1978 and 8 January 1982. These latter records are the most north-westerly of the species in South Australia.

CALAMANTHUS *Sericornis fuliginosus*

W: Met with all through the Ranges where it keeps to the big saltbush.

S: Seen near Corunna and Nonning and at two localities on Mt Ive Station.

P: Nonning. See also Parker (1980) for 1883 record from Coralbignie.

Several in *Triodia* on a small plateau in Corunna Gorge, 11 January 1975 and 24 April 1976 (latter also quoted in Reid 1980). See comments for Redthroat below.

REDTHROAT *Sericornis brunneus*

W: Distributed throughout the Ranges on saltbush plains as well as in the hill country.

S: Yannabie Dam.

P: Nonning.

Pair, 6 km S of Childara RH, in open *Acacia* shrubland on dunes, 16 October 1978. Individuals seen 2 km NE of Yardea Dam, 11 August 1982, between Mt Ive tank and Yardea,

12 August 1982 and at Corunna, 5 January 1982.

White (1913) said that he encountered Redthroats and Calamanthus in saltbush throughout the Ranges and implied that they were both common. Unfortunately, he gave no clear indication of how frequently he encountered either species. Sutton (1923), however, noted Redthroats once and Calamanthus thrice only and the few more recent records do not suggest either species to be common in the Ranges at present. Notably, the recent records of Calamanthus were made in *Triodia* not saltbush. One wonders whether Redthroats and Calamanthus have declined in the Gawler Ranges since White's visit, perhaps because of degradation of saltbush areas due to pastoral activities.

SLENDER-BILLED THORNBILL

Acanthiza iredalei

S: Coralbignie, Mt Ive.

P: NE of Yardea woolshed.

Several, saltbush plain at mouth of Corunna Gorge, 11 January 1975 and 7 October 1978; several, 10 km W of Yardea Dam, 6 January 1982.

WHITE-BROWED TREECREEPER

Climacteris affinis

W: South end of Lake Gairdner.

S: Wipipippee Rocks.

P: 25 km N of Angle Swamp, Lake Acraman.

Four adults, one carrying food to nestlings in a large Black Oak *Casuarina cristata*, 10 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978. Small party of two or three in Black Oak woodland, ca 30 km W of Lake Everard HS, 7 January 1982.

RUFOUS TREECREEPER *Climacteris rufa*

W: Donald's Plain.

S: Coralbignie, Whipstick Creek near Nonning and Donald's Plain.

P: Mallee W of Lake Gairdner, S of Yardea and Bittali Dam.

Resident throughout the Great Victoria Desert (Ford 1971).

Recent records constitute north-westerly range extensions within the Gawler Ranges: two, including a juvenile, in tall *Eucalyptus oleosa* woodland, 10 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978 and numerous at 2-3 km N and NW of Progress Dam 6 and 7 January, 1982.

RED WATTLEBIRD

Anthochaera carunculata

Widespread in the Gawler Ranges, north to Progress Dam and Mt Friday (Paton 1975).

Single birds recorded at: ca 15 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October 1978, 10 km S of Lake Everard HS, 14 October 1978 and heard three times at Nalara Rocks, 16-17 October 1978. This last locality appears to be the most north-westerly at which the species has been recorded in South Australia.

WHITE-EARED HONEYEATER

Lichenostomus leucotis

H: Nonning.

P: Conical Hill and between Lakes Acraman and Gairdner. Interestingly, not recorded by White (1913) or Sutton (1923).

Two at Coralbignie, 11 July 1982.

Other recent records again constitute north-westerly range extensions in and about the Gawler Ranges: two, 10 km S of Lake Everard HS, 15 October 1978; heard, 2-3 km N of Progress Dam, 7 January 1982; one at each of Nalara Rocks, 8 January 1982 and 5 km SW of Childara RH, 17 October 1978. The known north-western limit in South Australia is Maralinga (Black and Badman 1983).

YELLOW-PLUMED HONEYEATER

Lichenostomus ornatus

Widespread in the Gawler Ranges.

Very numerous in mallee on sandhills 10 km S of Lake Everard HS 14 October 1978 (dependent young and a nest with two eggs, ca 75 cm above the ground in a bluebush *Maineana* sp.). Also between Childara RH and Nalara Rocks, 16-17 October 1978. This species has been recorded in South Australia ca 100 km N of Cook (Black and Badman 1983).

GREY-FRONTED HONEYEATER

Lichenostomus plumulus

W: Met with on many occasions in the Gawler Ranges, never seen away from the hilly country.

S: Wipipippee Rocks.

P: 25 km N of Angle Swamp and Scrubby Peak.

In stunted *Eucalyptus socialis* on dunes at southern margin of Lake Acraman, 18 October 1978. Several parties seen 3 km S of Pondana Dam, 7-8 October 1978. Common to abundant on all visits to Corunna Gorge.

At a creek ca 7 km W of Corunna on 22 April 1978, both this and the preceding species were observed, the latter being more numerous. Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters kept to the mid- and higher strata of the trees lining the creek while the single Grey-fronted Honeyeater kept to the bushes and shrubs of the understorey.

CRIMSON CHAT *Ephthianura tricolor*

W: Thinly dispersed throughout the Ranges.

P: Near Yardea.

Several female-phase individuals seen on a saltbush plain at the mouth of Corunna Gorge, 10 January 1975. Plentiful in October 1978 throughout the Ranges and north to Moonaree and Lake Everard Stations. Not seen in the sandhill country west of Childara RH at that time.

ORANGE CHAT *Ephthianura aurifrons*

C: Listed but no further details.

W: "Fair" numbers met with on saltbush plains.

P: Near Lake Acraman and near Yardea.

Pairs seen in October 1978 at 2 and 15 km N of Pondana Dam and in a number of localities between Corunna and Nonning and about Yardea. Not as plentiful as Crimson Chats.

Records of Orange and Crimson Chats from the Gawler Ranges well illustrate the merits of visiting an area under varying seasonal conditions.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

P: Nonning and Yardea. No other previous records.

Several, Lake Everard HS, 7 January 1982.

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

P: Nonning, Angle Swamp, Kolendo and Yardea. No other previous records.

Several, 6 km N of Hiltaba and 16, 4 km N of Hiltaba, 7 January 1982. Also recorded ca 15 km W of Lake Everard HS, 8 October 1978.

WHITE-BROWED WOODSWALLOW

Artamus superciliosus

Not previously recorded despite the records of Chenery, White and Paton (1903, 1913 and 1975 respectively) of the Masked Woodswallow *A. personatus* with which this species frequently associates. In the Great Victoria Desert, *A. personatus* is also far commoner and *A. superciliosus* was recorded there for the first time in August and September 1979 (see Black and Badman 1983).

Seen in many places in October 1978 but in smaller numbers than *A. personatus*: from 10 km NW of White Dam to Siam, Nonning, Pondana Dam, Thurlga and Yardea.

LITTLE WOODSWALLOW *Artamus minor*

Several recorded on most visits to Corunna Gorge (but see DISCUSSION).

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE *Gymnorhina tibicen*

Widespread throughout the Ranges but not recorded at Lake Everard or in sandhill country. Most of those seen in October 1978 were White-backed (*i.e.* *G. t. leuconota*) but

about one third or less were hybrids (*i.e.* with *G. t. tibicen*).

GREY CURRAWONG *Strepera versicolor*

C: Listed but no further details.

S: Narlaby Tanks.

P: Near Lake Gairdner, Coralbignie Rocks, Mt Friday.

One, near Paney, 20 October 1978 and also recorded at Siam, 7 October 1978. Also recorded around and west of Nalara Rocks in October 1978 and January 1982. Single birds seen at 2 km N of Progress Dam, 7 January 1982 and 31 km N of Hiltaba, 8 January 1982. Heard at 10 km NW of Progress Dam, 7 January 1982.

LITTLE CROW *Corvus bennetti*

Not previously recorded. We note, however, that White (1913) under the heading of *Corvus coronoides*, the Australian Raven, remarked that one of the specimens he procured had pure white feather bases. This specimen, collected at Mt Ive, was presumably, therefore, *C. bennetti* (see Boehm 1951).

Recorded by call at Lake Acraman, ca 10 km W of Lake Everard HS and between Blue Dam HS and Lake Everard HS in October 1978 and ca 2 km NE of Scrubby Peak, 18 February 1982.

LITTLE RAVEN *Corvus mellori*

Not previously recorded. Identified by call ca 5 km E of Paney, 20 October 1978 and 12 km W of Yardea, 12 August 1982. Common in agricultural areas north of Minnipa. Not recorded in the Scrubby Peak-Pine Lodge area in February 1982. Further work on the distribution of this and other *Corvus* species in the Gawler Ranges would be desirable. Specimen evidence is needed to determine their distribution satisfactorily.

DISCUSSION

Present in the Gawler Ranges' avifauna are species characteristic of inland Australia (e.g. Cinnamon Quail-thrush, White-browed Tree-creeper, Grey-fronted Honeyeater) and closely related species more typical of southern Australian mallee-eucalypt communities (e.g. Chestnut Quail-thrush, Rufous Treecreeper, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater). The observations reported in this paper extend the known distributions mainly of southern species within and about the Ranges (e.g. Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Western Yellow Robin) and document the occurrences of species previously unrecorded such as the Painted Button-Quail, Shy Hylacola and White-browed Woodswallow.

Many of the species recorded in the lush conditions that followed winter rains in 1978

had been seen by few, if any, previous observers. The most notable examples were the various waterbirds and migratory waders such as the Great Cormorant, Glossy Ibis, Pacific Heron, Curlew and Common Sandpipers and the Lesser Golden Plover. Conversely, the Ground Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina maxima* has not been reported from the Ranges since the early 1970's (Hall 1974, Paton 1975). It is thus likely that much remains to be learned of the Gawler Ranges avifauna, and we suggest several matters that warrant attention.

It is not known whether the Little Woodswallow is present at Corunna Gorge throughout the year, for only one unsuccessful search has been made for it in late winter.

There are almost no published data on birds throughout the areas immediately east of Lake Gairdner (e.g. about Mahanewo) and on the islands of lakes Gairdner, Acraman and Everard.

The distributions of several mallee birds need clarification by more detailed surveys within the Gawler Ranges and in the Barton Sandhills. That is, the continuity or otherwise of species such as the Yellow-plumed and Brown-headed Honeyeaters and the Red Wattlebird between their various, known occurrences in south-western Western Australia, the Great Victoria Desert, the Barton Sandhills, the Gawler Ranges and Eyre Peninsula remains to be demonstrated (see Black and Badman 1983). In this respect, we note that three distinct mallee habitats occur in and about the Gawler Ranges. Firstly, there is the low (2-3 m) open mallee on the rocky, *Triodia*-clad hills throughout the Ranges. Secondly, there are the sandhill mallee communities with either *Triodia* or mixed shrub understoreys. Lastly, there are the semi-open and quite tall (> 4 m) mallee shrubland areas favoured by species such as the Rufous Treecreeper and which occur, for example, between Paney and Buckleboo and between Yardea and Hiltaba. Detailed comparative analyses of the birds of these mallee habitats would be useful not only from a theoretical, biogeographic standpoint, but also for their value in formulating conservation measures.

The distributions of the Thick-billed and Striated Grasswrens *Amytornis textilis* and *A. striatus* respectively in and about the Gawler Ranges are poorly understood. Given the extent of saltbush areas in the Ranges, *A. textilis* may well occur more widely than the records given above would indicate. In addition to those, White (1913) also noted under the heading of *Amytornis modesta* (= *A. textilis*, see Parker 1972) that the other members of his party saw

a "brown skulking bird in the saltbush" but that he himself did not see it. This description could conceivably apply to a Fieldwren so the record is best disregarded both for that reason and because no locality was given.

Concerning *A. striatus*, the Barton Sandhills appear to provide an abundance of ideal habitat but the species has not been recorded there. It has been recorded in Pinkawillinie Conservation Park to the south of the Gawler Ranges (Reid 1980). *A. striatus* may yet be found in *Triodia* on the rocky hills and gorges of Yardea, Nonning, Siam and Corunna. Searches for grasswrens in the Corunna gorges in January 1975 (five observers, two days) and April 1976 (four observers, one day) were however, unsuccessful.

Lastly, the Gawler Ranges are well known for the number of specimens of the Night Parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis*¹ procured there by F. W. Andrews in the late nineteenth century² (Paton 1975, Forshaw *et al.* 1976). This parrot inhabits samphire as well as *Triodia* (Forshaw *et al.* 1976, Forshaw 1981). It may still be worthwhile searching for Night Parrots in the Gawler Ranges, for both samphire and *Triodia* occur there in proximity (e.g. about Yardea and lakes Gairdner, Acraman and Everard).

¹Following the taxonomy of Ford (1969).

²The locality Murnea Rockholes is mentioned by Forshaw *et al.* (1976) as a locality where Andrews collected birds in the Gawler Ranges. It is not marked on some present day maps but is ca 8.5 km S of Moonaree HS, (L. Dewhurst, pers. comm.)

GAZETTEER

Localities not shown on Figure 1 but cited in the text.

Freshwater Swamp	.....	.....	32°36'S, 135°50'E
Peterby Yards	.....	.....	32°34'S, 135°18'E
Weetara Tank*	.....	.....	32°20'S, 135°55'E
Wipipippee Rocks	.....	.....	32°13'S, 135°16'E
Yarrana Tank	.....	.....	32°24'S, 135°45'E
Yartoo Tank*	32°22'S, 135°22'E

*Co-ordinates shown are approximate only. See map in Sutton (1923).

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