

UNUSUAL HONEYEATERS IN THE MOUNT LOFTY RANGES, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1981-1982

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We present records of White-fronted *Phylidonyris albigrons*, Yellow-plumed *Lichenostomus ornatus* and Black *Certhionyx niger* Honeyeaters observed in the Mount Lofty Ranges during 1981 and 1982. Each species is more typical of drier habitats, such as mallee areas, and has rarely been recorded in the Mount Lofty Ranges (Condon 1968, S.A.O.A. 1977). Rainfall and temperatures in the Mount Lofty Ranges and neighbouring parts of South Australia have been unusual for the past two years: winter of 1981 was one of the wettest on record; summer of 1981-82 was one of the hottest on record; and winter of 1982 was one of the driest, with the coldest minimum temperatures ever recorded. These extremes may have forced the honeyeaters to move into the wetter habitats of the Mount Lofty Ranges. The high rainfall in 1981 may have contributed as well. Wetter conditions of 1981 may have extended breeding seasons or improved breeding success, resulting in larger populations prior to the drought conditions of 1982 and adding to the pool of birds dispersing from inland areas.

White-fronted Honeyeater *Phylidonyris albigrons*

- (a) One on 27 and 28 February 1981 at Para Wirra Recreation Park feeding on nectar from flowers of *Amyema miquelli*. First record for the Park (see Clarke 1967, Ford and Paton 1976).
- (b) One, heard, 23 June 1982, at Sandy Creek Conservation Park. Rix (1976) recorded this species in the Park in March 1972 (two birds) and July and August 1972 (up to two pairs).
- (c) One on 13 and 14 July 1982 at Hale Conservation Park feeding on nectar from *Astroloma conostephioides* and at the extrafloral nectaries of *Acacia pycnantha*. First record for the Park.

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater

Lichenostomus ornatus

- (a) One immature on 2 January 1981 one kilometre N of Port Stanvac. Bird flying through in an easterly to south-easterly direction. Yellow gape and orange at base of bill.
- (b) About 30 present at Hale Conservation Park from 13 June 1982 to 13 August 1982.

First record for the Park. Twenty-four individuals were caught and banded with bands supplied by the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme. Of these, eight were adults, 14 were immatures (ca 6 to 12 months old) and two were of uncertain age. Nine were recaptured up to three times during the two month period. Birds arrived sometime between 25 May and 13 June and departed sometime between 13 and 21 August. Birds feeding mainly on nectar of *Astroloma conostephioides* and at the extrafloral nectaries of *Acacia pycnantha*.

- (c) Four or five flying over Sandy Creek Conservation Park on 23 June 1982. First record for the Park (see Rix 1976).
- (d) Two perched atop a tall, scorched *Pinus radiata* in Kuitpo State Forest on 12 March 1983. The area was decimated by fire on 16 February 1983 and the birds appeared to be passing quickly through.

Black Honeyeater *Certhionyx niger*

- (a) One female-plumaged bird at Hale Conservation Park on 12 September 1982, feeding on nectar of *Astroloma conostephioides*. First record for the Park.

Description: a predominantly grey bird, a little smaller than Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*, but with a longer tail; sharply decurved long black bill (long relative to body); back grey-brown in colour with a few darker streaks over wings and back, two faint paler bars across folded wing, abdomen fawn with speckled appearance (faint) across breast and on flanks, face darker, with chin and forehead being darker than rest of head, gape cream, pale grey patch (stripe) starting at eye and running down to ear. No other conspicuous features.

There are only seven records of Black Honeyeaters for the Mount Lofty Ranges, the last in 1963 (see Ford 1978).

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