

FIRST RECORD OF THE SQUARE-TAILED KITE IN THE SOUTH-EAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

J.R.W. REID

On 29 November 1983, while engaged in the trapping of small mammals in Penola State Forest (ca 10 km S of Penola), I observed from 60 m a moderately large species of raptor soaring at tree-top level (ca 15 m) through a block of native stringybark *Eucalyptus baxteri* woodland. I could discern few plumage details at this distance without the aid of binoculars, but the shape, flight and colour of the bird led me to believe that it was a Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura*: slightly upswept, long and broad 'fingered' wings, square (in fact slightly notched) end of tail, a generally reddish-brown body and the impression of a paler head.

Fortunately the bird came to rest atop a dead branch of a stringybark, and it was still there when I returned with binoculars (Pentax zoom, 6x-15x) some five minutes after. I approached gradually to the base of the tree in which it was perched and recorded the following field notes:

Tail pale, long and thin with a dark terminal band; wings at rest extended two to three cm past the tail, paler bar across wing-covers on shoulder; belly to throat reddish-brown, paler abdomen; coarse, dark vertical streaking on foreneck and upper chest; fine, dark streaking on breast; whitish frons and crown; slightly crested appearance to dark back of crown; off white, broad horizontal streak below eye in band ca 0.5 cm thick; legs pale and eyes pale orange-brown.

I flushed the bird and in flight, overhead, the broad, pale (not white) 'bullseyes' on the distal third of the wings were clearly visible. The bird was silent while under observation and it seemed unconcerned by my close proximity.

The above description is adequate to confirm the identity of this bird as a Square-tailed Kite (S.A. Parker, pers. comm.), and it appears to be the first record of the species from the South East of South Australia (see Parker and Reid 1983). The status and previously published records of this species in South Australia are to be reviewed in this journal (Parker, forthcoming).

REFERENCE

- Parker, S.A. and Reid, N.C.H. 1983. Birds. Chapter in *Natural History of the South East*. Tyler, M.J., Twidale, C.R., Ling, J.K. and Holmes, J.W. (eds). Royal Society of South Australia Incorporated: Adelaide.

34 Westbury Street, Hackney, S.A. 5069
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