

THE RED-WHISKERED BULBUL IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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The Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pyconotus jocosus* is a native of south-eastern Asia where it is found along forest edges and in parks, gardens and woodlands (Long 1981). Feral populations occur in a number of places including Malaysia, Hawaii and Australia. In New South Wales, it was released in Sydney in the 1880s but did not become widespread there until the early 1900s. By 1923 it was already considered a pest in orchards and gardens in New South Wales, particularly amongst peas, figs and strawberries (MacPherson 1923). It is now present on the coast of New South Wales from Lake Macquarie to the Shoalhaven River and west to the Blue Mountains. A second population, presumably derived from escapees, has become established at Coff's Harbour and is expanding (Blakers *et al.* 1984). It has also been recorded at Deniliquin. In Victoria, it was first recorded in Melbourne in 1915 and has been seen regularly in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens (Long 1981). Aston & Balmford (1978) only recorded it in the Essendon district of Melbourne in 1976. Elsewhere in Victoria it has been recorded at Morwell (Blakers *et al.* 1984).

Long (1981) incorrectly stated that the species is still common around Adelaide. Though environmental conditions in southern South Australia would appear to be ideal for these birds to establish breeding colonies, there have only been sporadic reports of the species in the State. Lendon (1944) saw a bulbul that he reported as *Otocampsa emeria* (= *P. jocosus*) in North Adelaide in December 1943 and was told that more than one had been seen in the vicinity during the previous few months. Terrill (1946) reported that bulbuls were seen at Westbourne Park in suburban Adelaide in 1944-45. Although he referred to these as Red-vented Bulbuls, his use of the name *P. jocosus* presumably indicates that he was discussing the present species and not *P. cafer*, the species normally referred to as the Red-vented Bulbul.

Recently, a number of reports of bulbuls in or near Adelaide have been published. All have been of *P. jocosus*. Storr & Delroy (1979) recorded four at Hackham in March 1979 following an apparently deliberate release of seven in the vicinity. Later, at the suggestion of the Avicultural Society of South Australia, the owner of the birds used a decoy bird to recapture six of the seven birds he knew to be in the

area (Nagel 1979). Pedler (1980) shot a female on 17 December 1979 near Murray Bridge. The bird had been feeding on apricots. It is now in the South Australian Museum, reg. no. B 32582. Filsell (1983) reported a pair of the species near Murray Bridge in July 1983. These latter two reports suggest that there may be a small feral population in the Murray Bridge area. Similarly, the following reports all come from within a radius of some four kilometres. Anon. (1981) recorded one feeding on blackberries *Rubus fruticosus* at Stirling in January 1980. Brune (1980) saw one feeding on the fruit of a 'solanum tree' *Solanum* sp. in Waterfall Gully on 19 October 1980 and Brune (1982) recorded two at Beaumont on 31 October 1981 and one at Waterfall Gully during mid-January 1982.

The only direct evidence of this species breeding in South Australia is that of Barrington (1985) who reported the fledging of four birds at Enfield in suburban Adelaide in December 1983.

The absence of other records in the literature should not be taken to imply that these birds have not been present; bird-watchers rarely include escaped species in their published lists. There is therefore no room for complacency if this bird, not only a potential pest to orchards and gardens but also a threat to native avifauna, is to be kept out of South Australia. In 1983 the Red-whiskered Bulbul was proclaimed a prohibited species under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972; it may therefore only be kept with a permit and may not be released or transferred without permission. This should eliminate further escapes and facilitate the extermination of any established feral populations.

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