

SIGHTING OF A PAINTED HONEYEATER IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S LOWER NORTH

KEN WOODCOCK

The Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta* is known from South Australia on the basis of two records: one from near Bool Lagoon in the South-East and one from the Strzelecki Track in the North-East. There is a further, unsubstantiated report from Curdimurka, south of Lake Eyre (see Matheson 1981 for a summary).

On 21 April 1984 I observed a Painted Honeyeater at about three kilometres north-east of Pitcairn HS (32°56'S, 139°17'E) or approximately 42 km E of Peterborough in the Lower North. The bird was in an area of mallee woodland consisting mainly of *Eucalyptus gracilis* and *E. socialis*, bordering the Manunda Creek. It was feeding on the flowers of a drooping mistletoe *Amyema miquelii* growing profusely in the vicinity. The bird then flew out from the mistletoe, over my head and perched on an exposed branch not more than eight metres distant. It remained thus for five seconds during which time I clearly saw the following features: pink bill, pure black back, white underparts extending to the chin, circular white ear patch and a yellow panel on the wings. The panel appeared to be much brighter than on other yellow-winged species of honeyeater, but this was probably due to its being completely surrounded by black. I had no doubt that the bird was a male Painted Honeyeater.

Other species of honeyeater in the locality at the time were White-plumed Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus penicillatus*, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters *Acanthogenys rufogularis* and

Red Wattlebirds *Anthochaera carunculata*, the latter feeding young out of the nest. After flying off in a westerly direction, the Painted Honeyeater was not seen again.

A further visit to the same area on the following day with other observers unfortunately proved fruitless as far as this species was concerned.

I consider that the discovery of a solitary Painted Honeyeater at Pitcairn although very unusual for the area, may well be explained by taking into account the abnormal weather conditions preceding the sighting. Pitcairn lies in a normally semi-arid region; however, 1984 had proved to be climatically unusual up until mid-April and the area had had useful rains at approximately fortnightly intervals since January (19 mm was recorded on 18 April). Consequently, the vegetation had benefited and there was evidence of recent breeding by many species. These conditions probably enabled nomadic species such as the Painted Honeyeater to travel well beyond their usually acknowledged distribution.

REFERENCE

Matheson, W.E. 1981. Records of the Painted Honeyeater in South Australia. *S. Aust. Orn.* 28 : 184-185.

21 Cynthia Street, Para Hills, S.A. 5096

Received 2 May 1984; accepted 28 May 1984