

GOLDEN WHISTLERS IN THE GAWLER RANGES

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The uncoloured Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* seen in the Gawler Ranges (northern Eyre Peninsula) by Carpenter (1985) was approximately 15 km north of the place (32° 12'S, 136° 27'E, ca 55km N of Nonning) where I recorded an uncoloured bird, also in Black Oak and mallee, in August 1973 (Paton 1975). Joseph and Black (1983) suggested that this was a female phase Gilbert's Whistler *P. inornata*, but I was aware at the time of the difficulty in distinguishing uncoloured Golden and Gilbert's Whistlers, and I am confident that my identification was correct.

My attention was first attracted by what I thought was a faint 'sweet' call often given by Golden Whistlers, but this call was not repeated. Gilbert's Whistlers were not seen in

this particular area but had been seen near Nonning the previous day. This bird seemed smaller. It was approximately the same size as a Rufous Whistler *P. rufiventris* and appreciably smaller than the Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica* both of which were in the vicinity. Identification was based on size, the faint khaki green wash on the brownish grey back, the buffy abdomen and the call. Unfortunately, having assured myself of the bird's identification more complete notes were not retained.

Field Guides give little help in distinguishing between uncoloured Gilbert's and Golden Whistlers. According to Pizzey (1980) the Golden Whistler is smaller and generally a browner grey on the back with pale grey to buff underparts (more buff in the west) and pale

edgings to the greater wing coverts forming a stripe across the folded wing. The Gilbert's Whistler is a more uniform grey with faintly blackish ear coverts and lacking the wing stripe. S.A. Parker (pers. comm.) has pointed out further distinguishing features which can be seen on most birds in the hand or in the field at close range. The throat of the Golden Whistler is usually faintly scalloped whereas in the Gilbert's Whistler this area has fine black striations.

L. Pedler (pers. comm.) has collected uncoloured specimens of the Golden Whistler at three northern Eyre Peninsula localities. These are South Australian Museum Reg. Nos. B34113, B37660 and B37661 respectively from ca 18 km SW of Buckleboo in October 1981, 30 km N of Ceduna on 21 August 1983 and 16 km SE of Yalata on 1 September 1983. Several birds including a coloured male were seen in mixed mallee and *Melaleuca* sp. at each of these places. He also saw a single uncoloured whistler believed to be a Golden Whistler in January

1982 in large mallee near Progress Dam on Hiltaba Stn., Gawler Ranges; it had a buff abdomen and undertail. In *The Atlas of Australian Birds* (Blakers *et al.* 1984) Golden Whistlers are reported for all 1° squares in latitude 33°S on Eyre Peninsula. Uncoloured, presumably young, birds are known to wander, particularly in the autumn and winter months, so it is not unexpected to find them in August in the northern Gawler Ranges.

REFERENCES

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- Received 19 April 1986; accepted 28 May 1986