

A NORTHERN SHOVELER AT BUCKLAND PARK

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The Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* is a rarely recorded bird in Australia. Blakers *et al.* (1984) cited only four records, one being an unconfirmed record made before 1900 and one being a specimen collected in New South Wales in 1839; of the remaining two, one was of a bird seen on the Darling River in 1975 (Moffat 1979) and the other was a South Australian record of one, possibly two, at Coongie Lake in the State's Far North-East in August 1979 (Close & Jaensch 1981). It is therefore interesting to note the following sightings of a drake Northern Shoveler on Buckland Park lake, ca 30 km NNW of Adelaide. This is a seasonal freshwater lake, which at the time covered some 50 ha. with a maximum depth of about one metre, though much of it was shallower.

The authors first saw the bird at 1500 on 3 September 1986, through a 20-45 zoom telescope whilst scanning a large, mixed congregation of Pink-eared Ducks *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*, Hardheads *Aythya australis*, Blue-billed Ducks *Oxyura australis*, Australasian Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*, Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea* and Australasian Shovelers *Anas rhynchosotis*. It was first seen at a range of ca 300m. Field notes of salient features as written at the time are:

White breast and upper flank patch; chestnut lower flanks; uniform head which had a green sheen; eye and bill dull.

The bird was relocated an hour later, though this time at some 500-600m and on the far side of the lake. It was then with five other ducks, presumably Australasian Shovelers. The Northern Shoveler dabbled with its companion birds near the vegetated margins of the lake. The bird was observed for about 30 minutes by the authors and F. Day. It was not seen flying. After 3 September, what was presumably the same bird was seen on about six occasions by J. Cox, F. Day and L. Robinson, the last sighting being on 11 October 1986.

On 12 August 1987 while in the company of M. Taylor of Auckland, New Zealand, JHH again saw a drake Northern Shoveler. It was subsequently seen by J. Cox, J. Hackett, M. Carter and several other observers. It was last seen on 12 September 1987. Possibly, it was the same bird as seen in 1986 and is moving around with Pink-eared Ducks and Australasian Shovelers.

Close & Jaensch (1981) discussed at length the Coongie record and it is interesting to note that our sightings were made at essentially the same time of year as their record of 28 August. Our records are therefore also at rather early dates for a species that moves south from its northern hemisphere breeding range usually in September and October. It seems likely that our records, like earlier ones in Australia, are of wild birds and not escapees from captivity. Indeed, this species may be less rare in Australia than it at present appears, given that only adult drakes in nuptial plumage are easily distinguished from Australasian Shovelers.

REFERENCES

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