

BIRD NOTE

BIRDS FEEDING ON THREAD IRIS BULBS

A number of species of introduced plants provide food for wild birds in the form of seeds or fruit. Much less often do introduced bulbs become available to birds for food. Road grading implements frequently expose the bulbs of the exotic Thread Iris *Gyndandiris setifolia* in districts where this plant grows. I have observed Galahs *Cacatua roseicapilla* and White-winged Choughs *Corcorax melanorhamphus* eating many bulbs exposed along freshly-graded roads on the Mount Mary Plains, S.A. Even more remarkable, however, is the fact that in times of severe food shortage House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* will actually dig up Thread Iris bulbs to eat them.

During December, 1967, in a period of

drought, at "Erdora", east of Sutherlands, S.A., I noted, "Twenty to thirty House Sparrows frequently dig up ground in the yard near house and feed on the bulbs of Thread Iris . . . The holes made by the birds to obtain the bulbs were 3-4 cm in depth".

These observations add to the information provided by Ford and Paton (1986) *The Dynamic Partnership: Birds and Plants in Southern Australia*. Govt. Printer, S.A.: Adelaide, on exotic food-bearing plants used by Australian birds.

E. F. Boehm: 5 Perth Avenue, Valley View, S.A. 5093.

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