

SIGHTINGS OF THE SQUARE-TAILED KITE NEAR ADELAIDE. On 11 September 1990, H. J. Cox, P. Spencer and I observed a Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* for nearly two hours at Sandy Creek Conservation Park, ca 38 km NE of Adelaide, South Australia.

When first seen, at approximately 09.30, the Kite was flying just above the trees on a low hill and now and again it disappeared when it circled the other side. Apart from shape, the most striking thing about the Kite was its white cap. At least, when flying towards us, head-on, it seemed to have a distinct white cap. Side-on it had a dark line through the eye, and below that was more white feathering from the bill to the ear coverts. When gliding the bird held its wings in a shallow 'V'. They were long and broad with expansive 'fingered' primaries. The tail was continually flexed and twisted, square-cut with sharp outer corners, quite pale and faintly barred near the tip. The underwing coverts, flanks and breast were rich rufous. The undersides of the primaries were contrastingly white, with barring gradually increasing towards the dark 'fingers'. The white patches were quite distinct, but not as obvious as on the Black-breasted Buzzard *Hamirostra melanosternon*. The uppersurfaces of the back and wings were very dark brown except for the rich buff central upperwing coverts that formed a distinct pale rectangular area in the centre of each wing.

After about 20 minutes the Kite disappeared, and we walked towards the hill over which it had been circling. As we neared the edge of the trees it came into view again. It was flying low above the treetops, circling all of the time, and then flew towards us, as if curious. We obtained excellent views of the Kite as it came to within 100 metres of us, at a height-angle of about 70° over the tree canopy.

On the low, sandy hill the woodland is a fairly dense mixture of *Callitris* sp. and *Eucalyptus* sp. with a canopy about 15 metres high. Much

Banksia sp. forms an understorey. Some lower, richer-soiled ground supports taller trees.

We eventually became quite used to the Kite appearing above the trees now and again during our stay in the area until 11.45; but it was not seen on subsequent visits to Sandy Creek by J. Hackett and myself a week and two weeks later.

At approximately 15.00 on 28 October 1990, J. Hackett, J. Hatch and I saw a Square-tailed Kite flying over a stand of very tall Eucalypts growing by the South Para Reservoir, 9 km SSE from Sandy Creek. It was mainly soaring and gliding, with wings held in a shallow 'V', about 200 metres high and almost directly above us before flying off to the north-west. Its long wings had white patches at the bases of the primaries that contrasted with a semi-circle of very dark primary coverts. The primaries were broadly 'fingered' when the bird was soaring or flapping its wings, but when gliding they were nearly closed, with only the tips of some 'fingers' being visible. The underparts appeared light rufous-brown. The tail was pale, fawn-brown with a faint subterminal bar, long and square-cut at the tip.

The above sightings were the first Square-tailed Kites I have seen near Adelaide (despite continuous residence in the Adelaide area for 17 years) and the first seen by me in South Australia since 1976. Debus (1991, *S.A. Orn.* 31: 57-71) has reviewed all South Australian records of the species and considers there to be only two previous acceptable records from near Adelaide: one collected at Blackwood on 12 October 1913, and one flying over Clapham on 11 September 1975.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to Stephen Debus for his comments on these notes.

John B. Cox: 7 Agnes Court, Salisbury East, South Australia 5109.

Received 7 November 1990.