

RED-BROWED PARDALOTE *PARDALOTUS RUBRICATUS* IN THE FLINDERS RANGES.

On 2 August 1995, between about 0730 and 1300 h, note was made of the birds seen while assisting Sam Wade, from the University of Adelaide, with the collection of stream samples in the creek just below Elatina Hut (31°21'S, 138°38'E). The hut is located on one of the tributaries of the Brachina Creek, in the Trezona Range, of the Flinders Ranges, South Australia.

Most significant of the birds recorded was a pair of Red-browed Pardalotes *Pardalotus rubricatus*. They spent a considerable amount of time foraging on the ground, occasionally less than 3 m from us, and the pair also took turns to bathe in the stream. They landed in shallow water, vigorously splashed for a few seconds, then flew to a rock near the water's edge. Following bathing, they shook themselves and preened vigorously, all for very short periods, before flying back up into the canopy of the river red gums.

The main feature that drew attention to them initially was the very distinct call which is quite unlike the familiar 'double-chip' call of the Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus* – the pardalote more usually found in the area. Seen close at hand, their large orange wing-flashes were clearly visible, together with the Red-browed Pardalote's characteristic orange-yellow eyebrow.

The Red-browed Pardalote is a bird of the arid and semi-arid interior of Australia (Longmore 1991), and Condon (1968) reported it to be 'common along watercourses' in the northern parts of South Australia. Records for sightings in the Flinders Ranges are sparse. While bird-banding in April 1990, C. Rich (pers. comm.) observed two in some river red gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *obtusata* along the Hamilton Creek, about 7 km ENE of the old Mount Fitton Homestead in the North Flinders Ranges; approximately 190 km NE of the present sighting. His attention also initially was drawn to them because of their unfamiliar call. The author recorded them in other river red gums just downstream, but in the same general vicinity (29°58'S, 139°38'E) as the Rich record, in June 1995. Again, they attracted attention because the call was so different from that of the more common Striated Pardalote which they were assumed to be. Field notes made at the time suggested the familiarity of the call indicated it had been present on earlier occasions but that insufficient attention had been paid to identifying the source of the call.

The Red-browed Pardalote was not included in the original bird list for Arkaroola, 40 km SW of Mount Fitton Homestead (May 1972a,b), or the supplementary list dated to 1985, nor did it appear in the Bird List of Gammon Ranges National Park, just south of Arkaroola (NPWS undated), though there it was mentioned in the list of 'birds that occur in the region and may occur in the park'. The recently-published guide *Explore the Flinders Ranges* (Barker *et al.* 1995) lists birds recorded in the Flinders Ranges and again the Red-browed Pardalote was not included. In the north-west of South Australia, Badman (1979) found this species to be 'apparently more widespread than *P. striatus* and perhaps slightly more common', while Close and Jaensch (1984) concluded it was widespread in small numbers. A similar interpretation could be put on the observations reported by Cox and Pedler (1977) and Bransbury (1984) for the north-east of the state. Cox and Pedler (1977) found them along watercourses, and Pedler and Ragless (1978) observed them 'in coolibahs on Callabonna Creek' (about 90 km east of Mount Fitton); and 'almost certainly heard them at Paralana Creek', near Arkaroola, on 26 April 1977. This area is effectively the eastern side of the North Flinders Ranges, while Badman (1981) reported one sighting at Witchelina Station, 25 km SSW of Marree on 5 July 1977; effectively just west of the North Flinders Ranges.

Taken collectively, these records could indicate that the southern limits for the distribution of the Red-browed Pardalote include the northern parts of the Flinders Ranges and adjacent plains. It may be more common in this area than records show, due to the paucity of observers. Furthermore, the observation at Elatina Hut could be close to, if not on, the southern limit of its range.

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*Peter Hornsby: Nent Oura Research Unit,
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, S.A. 5005*

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