

OBSERVATION OF BLACK-CHINNED HONEYEATERS BREEDING IN THE HACKHAM AREA DURING JULY/AUGUST 1994. In July 1994 a pair of Black-chinned Honeyeaters *Melithreptus gularis* were observed plucking wool from sheepskin rugs pegged on the washing line of our home in suburban Hackham, 25 km south of Adelaide. The birds flew to and from the west and we presumed that they were building a nest in one of the tall gums which are plentiful along the disused railway line nearby. The pair came at regular intervals, approximately every 10–20 minutes, but only one would pluck and gather the wool (Figure 1) while the other 'stood guard' nearby. This behaviour continued for about two weeks, during which we moved the rugs under the verandah in order to get a better look at the birds. They did not seem at all disturbed by our presence and would come to pluck wool from the rugs when we were seated 3–4 m away.

We did not see the honeyeaters for some time (exact period not recorded), but in order to entice them back I left the rugs out, along with some dog hair, pegged to the washing line. The birds returned, and after some days of regular visits to the sheepskins, we noticed their nest in a tall eucalypt tree in our garden. The nest was suspended high up in the outer leaves of the tree, but was so well hidden, that it could only be seen

when the wind blew the leaves. The nest was cup-shaped and appeared to be made of dog hair. I was unsure whether this was a different pair of birds, or a second breeding of the original pair.

Over subsequent days we observed the Black-chinned Honeyeaters coming down for dog hair, drinking and bathing in the bird bath and being harassed by the many aggressive New Holland Honeyeaters *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*. The pair successfully fledged two chicks, which we saw on a couple of occasions drinking from the bird bath, with the parents close by. The Black-chinned Honeyeaters were consistently mobbed by groups of New Holland Honeyeaters and we wondered if they were responsible for their disappearance from our area. It is noteworthy that Black-chinned Honeyeaters have a patchy and isolated distribution in the Adelaide Region. They were recorded in only 10 and 9 of the 10,000 sq. yard grid squares in the 1974/75 and 1984/85 SAOA Atlases respectively (Paton *et al.* 1994).

REFERENCE

- Paton, D. C., Carpenter, G. and Sinclair, R. G. 1994. A second bird atlas of the Adelaide region. Parts 1 and 2. *South Australian Ornithologist*, 31, pp. 168 and 186.
- Suzanne Elsworth: 19 Farmsworth Drive, Morphettvale, S.A. 5162
- Received: 10 June 1997

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Figures 1a and b. A Black-chinned Honeyeater on the washing line and gathering wool from a sheepskin rug.