

MIMICRY OBSERVED IN SILVEREYE *Zosterops lateralis* AT EWENS PONDS CONSERVATION PARK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA. Chisholm (1965a) remarked how Silvereyes were considered 'perhaps the most consistent mimic among common birds' and they were 'heard giving diminutive imitations of whipbird, wagtail, mudlark and even the kookaburra'. Chisholm (1965a) also mentioned how certain small birds frequently steal the voice of the Silvereye.

At 0910 h on 28 March 2002 in Ewens Ponds Conservation Park, Lower South East of South Australia, the authors observed two Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis* performing whispered mimicry of calls of local bush birds. The two birds were observed foraging and moving about in a native cherry *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, frequently wing flicking. Whispered mimicry was noted by Chisholm (1965b) as one of the three types of imitation by birds. Robinson (1975) indicated that mimicking sounds can follow one another rapidly in a constant stream, and that the tonal content appears to be constant.

During a short observation period of 5–10 minutes we heard these two birds in a continuous 'whispered mimic' imitate parts of the calls of the following native and introduced birds: Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*, Weebill *Smicrornis brevirostris*, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*, Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*, Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*, and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. The observations were at close range (<5 m) using 12x25 binoculars. Grey Fantail

Rhipidura fuliginosa was the only other bird species nearby during this time.

This note is a reminder to bird observers not to rely solely on calls heard as a means of identification. This lesson was well explained by Ragless (1958) who heard a Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus* call (he had not previously observed that species in the area near Clarendon), but found the source to be a mimicking Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*. Our experience was similar in that the Silvereyes were mimicking the Weebill, a species not commonly encountered locally by the authors.

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