

A FURTHER RECORD OF BAILLON'S CRAKE ON KANGAROO ISLAND. There have been few sightings of the secretive Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* on Kangaroo Island (Lashmar 1936; Barritt 1984; Baxter 1995; Carpenter 1996; and Baxter 1999) despite the diligence of astute resident and visiting observers over many decades. This record adds to what is known of the species on Kangaroo Island by providing details of an unfortunate wreck of waterbirds, including this species, at the Cape Willoughby Lighthouse (c. 35°50'S, 138°08'E) in September 1999.

On 5 September 1999, the National Parks guide at Cape Willoughby Lighthouse, Mr Wren Lashmar, noticed a number of dead birds lying around the light tower (pers. comm.). This was not unusual as seabirds, waterfowl and shorebirds are known to periodically 'wreck' at night, particularly during bad weather, by crashing into the light-room turret, to which they are apparently attracted, at this and other lighthouses. Correspondingly, it is not surprising that light stations, historically, have had concentrations of semi-domestic or feral cats in their immediate vicinity. On investigating he found the predominate species unusual and could not immediately identify them. Several carcasses had been scavenged, but he picked up five intact specimens of two species, placed them into a freezer, and transported them to me in Kingscote the following day.

Inspection of the specimens showed them to be four Baillon's Crake and one Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*. My subsequent search at the light tower precinct and examination of scattered remains revealed a further four Baillon's Crake had also apparently died in the same wreck, making eight in total. Also among older remains found was the feathered dorsal body section of a male Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*, complete with most of the diagnostic tail feathers still attached.

The weather over the 48 hours prior to the wreck was typical for early spring on Kangaroo Island with constant north-west winds of 22–36

knots, shifting westerly with gusts to 48 knots, some showers with low–mid level cloud and diurnal visibility of c. 15 km (W. Lashmar *in litt.*). These seemed hardly ideal conditions for massed bird movements, unless these birds were taking advantage of a tail wind enroute to the Lower Murray Lakes and Coorong region from the nearby Lashmar Lagoon complex, where the species has been recorded previously (Lashmar 1936), or from further afield on lower Eyre Peninsula.

The Baillon's Crake specimens were transferred to the South Australian Museum and added to the Aves collection with the following registration numbers assigned: B49158 male, B49159 male, B49160 female and B49325 male (Dr P. Horton *in litt.*).

While it is well known that many seabird, waterfowl and shorebird flocks fly at night and there are many records of flocks crashing into human-made structures, the extent and frequency of lighthouse wrecks is not well understood in South Australia. There may well be many such records buried in the archived logbooks of former light-stations around the State, as well as anecdotes from the few remaining 'lighthouse keepers'.

REFERENCES

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Terry E. Dennis: 5 Bell Court, Encounter Bay, S.A. 5211

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