

In the Pine and Mallee.

By J. W. Mellor, R.A.O.U.

Part II.

LIST OF BIRDS IDENTIFIED IN THE HUNDRED OF
BOOKPURNONG, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

October, 1918.

Emu (*Dromiceaus novae-hollandiae*).—The fresh marks of this bird were observed, and an egg taken in the district worked. A clutch of eight eggs had not long ago been taken.

Eastern Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—These birds were only moderately common, their call being sometimes heard in the grass, and on one occasion a bird rose up so quickly from beneath my feet, that it struck a stiff stemmed shrub, which plucked quite a number of feathers from its breast.

Button Quail (*Austroturnix velox*).—Several were flushed in the long grass where they were feeding.

Bronzewing Pigeon (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—Noted on several occasions, but not common.

Crested Bronzewing Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*).—Extremely common in pairs, and at times several pairs would alight on a dead tree together, but they were timid, and flew off with a “whirr” and “flap” of wings when approached.

White-headed Stilt. These birds were flying over, making the usual barking call not unlike that of a small dog.

Scrub Curlew (*Burhinus magnirostris*).—At night time these birds uttered their well-known mournful notes of “curlew curlew curlew.”

Australian Night Heron or Nankeen (*Nycticorax calidonicus australasiae*).—At night time these birds flew over apparently going to the Murray some miles away to feed.

Australian Goshawk (*Urospiza fasciata*).—Seen on several occasions in the mallee country.

Collared Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*).—Seen in the mallee on one occasion only.

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*).—Not plentiful; those seen were soaring and circling in the air, the huge nests of the birds were seen on several occasions, one especially large one was placed in a tall hillock.

Brown Hawk (*Ieracidea berigora*).—Seen on one occasion.

Nankeen Kestrel (*Cerchneis cenchroides*).—Not plentiful.

Southern Boobook Owl (*Spiloglaux boobook marmorata*).—In the pines and also in the large mallee calling mournfully at night.

Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta Porphyrocephala*).—Very common in the mallee, where they were breeding freely, all the nests examined having large young, three being the general number. The old birds were extremely noisy as they clung to the mallee boughs seeking honey from the flowers.

Pink Cockatoo or Major Mitchell (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*).—In pairs, seen on every hand, they were breeding in the hollows of the very large mallee, the young being almost ready to leave the nest, three being the clutch. The old birds were feeding on the open grass flats, upon the native grass, reeds, etc. They were often in company with the rose-breasted species. A pair made regular visits to my camp, and foraged about in the grass only a short distance away.

Rose-breasted Cockatoo or Galah (*Eolophus roseicapillus*).—Were about in small coveys of half a dozen or more feeding on the grass seeds on the open flats about the pines.

Cockatoo Parrot (*Leptolophus auricomis*).—In pairs flying swiftly just above the mallee, settling at times, and calling loudly; they had apparently just arrived, and were looking for nesting hollows.

Mallee Ring-neck Parrot (*Barnardius barnardi*).—These parrots were common in the mallee, always in pairs, and were breeding in the hollows, all nests had fledged young, four in number. The parent birds were very noisy, being at times extremely excited, and pugnacious should another pair come near their selected locality.

Many-coloured Parrot (*Psephotus varius*).—Fairly common in pairs not far from the Victorian border; I believe them to be the Victorian species.

Yellow-vented Parrot or Bluebonnet (*Northiella haemogaster wanthorrhoa*).—In pairs and not uncommon, especially in the open country where pines were plentiful, and in these trees the birds came to roost at night. The dull olive green on the backs of these birds made it very difficult to detect them when they settled on the ground with the half dry grass about them.

Shell Parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—These pretty little parrots were very plentiful in flocks, flying with undulating movement across the open grass land, seeming to be guided by a leader or leaders, as the whole flock would twist and turn systematically and in perfect unison, all the time uttering their pretty little warbling notes. When a flock settled on a dry tree, the tree would instantly be transformed into a living one with the elongated leaves swaying in the breeze, for the little birds being very animated are never still.

Mallee Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides rossi*).—These birds were in the pine and mallee, and regularly their low weird call of "boo boo boo" often repeated would start soon after sunset, and continue well into the night, as they sat upon some post or convenient place, and ever and anon sallied forth after their food.

Red-backed Kingfisher (*Cyanalcyon pyrrhopygius*).—Seen only on one occasion in the small mallee country.

Bee-eater (*Cosmaerops ornatus*).—Fairly common especially in sandy localities.

Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo (*Neochalcites basalis meliori*).—Seen on several occasions.

Bronze Cuckoo (*Lamprolaima plagosus*).—Not common.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).—Fairly plentiful.

Eastern Black and White Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosternum stonci*).—Seen near sandy banks in open localities.

Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans caleyi*).—Often seen in the thinly timbered parts, and a nest in course of building in a leaning mallee was noted.

Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascinans*).—Seen at times in the thinly timbered parts, and a nest in course of building in a leaning mallee was noted.

Southern Red-capped Robin (*Whiteornis goodenovii*).—This pretty little bird was to be seen in all situations in the dense mallee; and open pine country. It was nesting; and several nests examined contained large young.

Southern Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata vigorsi*).—Only seen on one occasion in the mallee.

Greenish Tree-tit (*Smicrornis brevirostris viridescens*).—Common in the mallee.

Southern Rufous-breasted Thickhead (*Lewinornis rufiventris inornatus*).—A few seen in the pine country.

Eastern Red-throated Thickhead (*Gilbertornis rufigularis*).—I have never before seen these birds so plentiful, especially in the pine country towards the Victorian border. They were calling and answering one another in all directions, one call being of a ventriloquial nature, and often leading one astray when trying to find the birds. The call of these birds is very full and clear at times.

Black and White Fantail (*Leucocirca tricolor*).—Fairly numerous, a nest on a leaning mallee was in course of building.

Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*).—Only a few seen in the mallee country.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandiae melanops*).—Not plentiful.

White-shouldered Caterpillar-eater (*Lalage tricolor*).—Only seen once in the open pine country.

Chestnut-backed Ground Bird (*Cinlosoma castanotum*).—Only one bird seen, it being a female which was walking on the ground in the low bushes beneath the mallee.

Chestnut-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus ruficeps*).—These birds were quite common especially in the more open pine country, where they were in small coveys of five or six.

They were very noisy and animated in their actions, threading their way through the thick pines, sometimes flying from tree to tree, or hopping and running over the ground very quickly. Numbers of those seen were this season's birds, and in the pines their huge stick nests were seen, sometimes so large as to quite bend the pine over with the weight. No nests were found to be occupied.

White-browed Babbler (*Morganornis superciliosus*).—Only a few seen, the former bird seeming to take the place of the smaller species.

Southern Brown Song Lark (*Cinclorhamphus cruralis cantatoris*).—Fairly numerous on the more open grass land, and on the samphire country, where the females kept to the ground and the low bushes, while the males soared aloft in the air singing their well-known call "Want-to-go-to-Egypt."

White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura albifrons*).—Met with in the open country.

Red-fronted Chat (*Parepthianura tricolor*).—Only one seen in the open country.

Orange-fronted Chat (*Aurepthianura aurifrons*).—A few were noticed on the open samphire country.

Red-rumped Tit (*Acanthiza pusilla hamiltoni*).—Only a few observed in the mallee.

Chestnut-rumped Tit (*Acanthiza uropygialis ruthergheni*).—Plentiful in the mallee.

Victorian Yellow-rumped Tit (*Geobasileus chrysorrhous sandlandi*).—From the light fawn colour of the flanks I take this to be the Victorian sub-species; they were seen near to the Victorian border.

Black-backed Wren (*Malurus melanops*).—These beautiful little wrens were observed in the country adjacent to the Victorian border, usually in the low bushes on the fringe of the mallee, where they thread their way through the thickets with remarkable agility. The males are very shy, and dart off at the least noise, leaving their more sombre mates to face the intruder. These birds seem to have only just started to breed. I saw a nest with one egg; it was composed of fine dry grass, lined with rabbit's fur, and placed in a hop bush 18 inches from the ground. It measured outside, 5½ inches long by 3½ inches broad; inside, 3½ inches by 2 inches. The entrance was exceptionally large, being 1¾ inches in diameter.

Masked Wood Swallow (*Campbellornis personatus munna*).—These birds with the next species had just arrived in large numbers and were seeking nesting quarters, but none had started building.

White-browed Wood-swallow (*Campbellornis superciliosus*).—In numbers, and like the former species were making a great fuss in certain places which they had selected for building purposes.

Wood-swallow (*Pseudartamus cyanopterus*).—These birds were also common, and, I believe, are about all through the year. They had started to breed, and several nests were noted in the forks of trees, and behind broken limbs in the mallee. Three eggs formed the clutch.

Victorian Grey Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica victoricae*).—Only a few seen, their beautiful notes resounding through the timbered glades in the early morning.

Murray Magpie or Magpie Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*).—Seen on only one occasion.

White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca leuconota*).—Seen in the open country.

Mallee butcher-bird (*Bulestes torquatus collei*).—This bird which I believe is the Victorian sub-species was fairly common, but each pair had its own little locality. They were very pugnacious when other birds entered their sanctuaries. I noted an exception to this rule near the Victorian border where four young butcher birds sitting on a small dry bush were being fed by their parents. In the same bush, and close to them were three young fully fledged streaked honey-eaters also being fed by their parents. All were living in harmony. A pair of butcher birds had their nest not far from my camp, and their loud calls were heard throughout the day, especially in the early morning, when the notes were very loud and clear.

Southern Crested Bell-bird (*Oreoica cristata clelandi*).—Not common. Seen in the mallee. Their notes of "reep-reep, reepbook" were often heard. It was difficult to find the bird by following the sound, as they are good ventriloquists.

White-face Titmouse (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*).—Very common in all situations. Hopping on the ground in little coveys in search of food, they had apparently done breeding, and were out with their young. No fresh nests were seen.

Slender-billed Tree-runner (*Neositta pileata tenuirostris*).

—Seen on several occasions in the pine country, where they were flying in little coveys of five or six. On alighting, they would carry out their usual method of searching for food, by circling around the trunks of the trees head downwards, and on reaching the bottom, fly away to another tree to repeat the performance. They never go up the trunks.

Southern Brown Treecreeper (*Neoclima picumna australis*).

—Very common in the large mallee, where they were breeding in the hollows, and were very noisy indeed. Their notes of “pink pink pink” were heard in all directions as the birds hopped up the tree trunks always in a circular motion. Should they wish to keep out of sight they would pause on the farther side of the tree for a minute or two, and then fly to another tree, keeping it between them and the intruder.

Southern White-browed Tree-creeper (*Climacteris erythroptus parsonsi*), sub-sp. nov. (Mellor, South Australian Ornithologist, Vol. IV., page 5).—This species which I have just named after my friend and enthusiastic ornithologist, Mr. Frank E. Parsons, of Adelaide, I found in the pine country near the Victorian border. Only a pair was secured. They are very silent compared with the former species, but their habits of searching out their food on the tree trunks are similar. I was not surprised at finding them very different from the white-browed tree creeper of Central Australia seeing that the country they live in is so different. The cooler and more fertile country doubtless accounts for their larger and more robust form.

Southern Striped Diamond Bird (*Pardalotinus striatus subaffinis*).—Common in pairs and were nesting in the small hollows of the mallee, their pretty oft repeated call of “chucky chuck” being heard in every bit of mallee one came to. They were well on with their breeding as every nest examined had large young in it, and the parent birds were ever on the go carrying food to their offspring.

Mallee Brown Headed Honey-eater (*Melithreptus atricapillus mallee*).—Noted in the mallee country.

Southern Striped Honey-eater (*Plectorhyncha lanceolata neglecta*).—Seen on several occasions in the mallee country

where they were breeding. Fully fledged young as described previously were seen in company with the butcher bird. A nest swinging at the extreme end of a bough of a tall bull oak was examined, and found to contain three freshly hatched young. The nest was composed of the usual sheep's wool.

Black Honey-eater (*Cissomela nigra*).—This little honey-eater was moderately plentiful in the mallee scrub, also in the "wild tobacco" country, where it was seeking the honey with its long tongue from the narrow tube-like yellow flowers. It was in pairs, so probably was just about to breed, but no indications of nests were noted.

Eastern White-fronted Honey-eater (*Glyciphila albifrons incerta*).—Noted principally in the mallee country, but also in the pines. They were calling loudly, and were very shy, making off at the slightest noise. They were feeding on the honey from the flowers of the mallee.

Southern Singing Honey-eater (*Meliphaga sonora*).—Noted in the pines, but by no means plentiful.

Graceful Honey-eater (*Lichenostomus ornatus talemii*).—Plentiful in all situations, especially in the mallee, where it was breeding. Large young were seen both in and out of the nest.

Black-eared Minah (*Myzantha flavigula melanotis*).—Numbers in the mallee and pine country; very noisy and quarrelsome when other birds came near them. Large young were accompanying their parents on the wing.

Southern Spiny-cheeked Honey-eater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis cygnus*).—Noted breeding, but not plentiful.

Southern Pipit (*Anthus australis adclaidensis*).—Seen in the open grass country, also on the samphire flats.

Small-billed Crow (*Corvus bennetti*).—A few pairs in the pine country. One pair made repeated visits to my camp to secure bits of meat, etc., but were off directly any noise was made.

Southern Whitewinged Chough (*Coccorax melanorhamphus whiteae*).—Several coveys of six or seven were seen in the pine country.