

Bird Note

Hitchhikers, 1980s style

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Anybody who has been to the 'Trading Post' in Innamincka will have noticed the House Sparrows, *Passer domesticus*, usually no more than eight to ten, that hang around the doorway looking for any scraps. It has fascinated me that I have never seen any House Sparrows at any of the camp sites around Innamincka or further out from the town.

A long-time resident of Innamincka told me that these little birds arrived in Innamincka in 1985 (J Osborne, pers comm). It was during the year when the film *Burke & Wills* was being made.

To give authenticity to the movie, horses and camels were brought to Innamincka. No local feed was available for these animals, so it had to be transhipped from Hawker. Heavy rain had closed the Strzelecki Track, so the semi-trailers laden with hay and fodder had to wait in Hawker until the roads were re-opened.

This warm, dry and safe environment was welcomed by the House Sparrows. They moved in amongst the hay bales. When the trucks drove off towards Innamincka, some of the House Sparrows stayed on board, and this is how the little hitchhikers arrived in Innamincka.

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