

Notes on Birds met with during a Visit to South-West Queensland.

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No. II.

The next day's journey was over rough country—as the ordinary track, running in the valley of the Wilson and skirting the lignum was under water. Shortly after leaving camp, we saw a pair of Brolgas, who indulged in a dance, perhaps for our benefit, and took but little notice of the cars. After passing the Nappa Merrie boundary, we came out on stony tableland country, but no bird life of interest was noted. On arrival at the Cooper, which was now a fine sheet of water at the homestead, but well within its banks, we left the cars and were ferried across in boats, and received a hearty welcome from Mr. John Conrick; jun., and his brother, Edward.

During a visit to Fort Wells, up the creek some two miles, on the next day, we met with the Brown Flycatcher, which I had not seen since leaving the Darling. From skins obtained and compared with Southern forms in Dr. Macgillivray's collection, this one probably belongs to the sub-species *pallida*. A nest, with two fresh eggs in the usual situation, was taken on the return journey. We also met with a Brown Tree-creeper, specimens of which were obtained, which was probably *Olimac-teris waiti*, a sub-species lately described by S. A. White. These birds were only met with in small families in box timber in immediate vicinity of the Cooper. Fort Wills is of some historic interest in Australian exploration, as the site of a depot from which Burke, Wills, Gray, and King made their dash for the Gulf and, on their return to this depot, found that the main party, which had remained behind, had left for the South. The oval, bare space on the box tree, from which the bark had been removed, still bears the chiselled inscription of an arrow, and the words "DIG —13 feet—" to indicate a cache of stores in case these members

of the party did return. Burke and Wills both died on Innamincka Station country, during their efforts to reach Blanche-water Station, down the creek. King lived with the blacks and was treated well until picked up by Howitt. There is a very ancient nigger at Nappa Merrie who reckons he remembers seeing King. This was in 1861, so much for the historical interlude. We spent two interesting days at the head station, including a boat excursion on the Cooper, during which we met with a colony of Fairy Martins, with their bottle nests attached to a mass of drift-wood caught in the overhanging boughs of the ti-tree, and suspended a few feet above the water, and a teal's nest with nine eggs in a dense lignum bush. The Black Honey-eater was also noted here, and a frail nest, only three feet from the ground, containing one egg, was found. Both species of Ground Dove were found nesting, also the Red-backed Kingfisher and the Red-lore'd Pardalote. Both of these species burrow into the bank for nearly two feet and the Pardalote's nest is quite a substantial one of grass and rootlets.

A nest of the White-winged Wren was found also, placed in the fork of a stunted tree, five feet from the ground, a most unusual situation, but there was very little ground bush in the paddock. *Malurus assimilis* was also identified, and a nest of *Smicrornis* with three incubated eggs in a needlewood found. On the 26th September we left in a Ford car, with Mr. Joe Conrick, a keen nature photographer, for Bamoulah Out Station, 45 miles up the Cooper. A Black Falcon was seen early in the journey. On the tableland country the Mitchell grass was sprouting green, and flocks of sheep enjoying it. *Ashbyia* was seen here and a nest found from which the bird was flushed, but proved empty. Later, we saw fully fledged young of this species. St. Ann's sheep station, the residence of Mr. Clive Conrick, was reached at 18 miles. From here the road was rough, sandhills and porcupine belts alternating with lignum flats and box timber. A sharp look out was kept for any signs of the Night Parrot in this country, which I should say is ideal for it, but none were seen. Two Kites' nests were taken, each containing eggs. Pacific Herons, a Little Eagle, Night-herons, were noted also. A noticeable absence of parrots in this district. We saw one pair of Blue Bonnets this day and a few Ring-necks. Bamoulah is 45 miles from head station, and is situated in park-like country on a permanent water-hole. In its neighbourhood the Cooper is no longer a single stream, but spreads over a tremendous area of lignum swamp country, interspersed with narrow channels. Here, for two or three days, we tramped the swamps and forded the channels most times

only waist deep, but some of the larger ones necessitating a swim. Ducks of five varieties were met with, all breeding, but we were too late by three weeks for eggs. White-eyed Ducks were the most numerous, and nests with fifteen eggs were found, placed in the thickest grass, which here grows feet high—a coarse swamp variety. The nests were plentifully supplied with down and the eggs generally hidden by it. Identification of the owners was not always easy, as they sneak off while one is some distance away, and then remain concealed as they travel to the nearest channel. A family of 23 young with the two parent birds was counted, both by Dr. Macgillivray and myself, at Bamoulah water-holes. Pink-eared Ducks and Grey Teal were also very numerous. Next in order came the Black Ducks, and finally, Eyton's Tree Duck, the "Queensland Whistler." Only one nest of this species was found, containing nine eggs and with no down in it. The bird was flushed. Their rather long, reddish legs, which hang down for a time when they rise, and their soft whistling note renders this variety easily identified. Wood Ducks were only met with at Bilpa water-hole, later on the trip, and Mountain Ducks were not seen. Swans were not found breeding either, although a few were seen at Bilpa. The other waders seen in the channel country were Australian Coot, in great numbers, odd pairs of Porphyrio, and the Black-tailed Native Hen, also in great numbers. I did not identify the Gallinula or Moor-hen, but it is probably there also. Red-kneed Dottrells and the Black-fronted variety were occasionally seen. The Yellow-legged Spoonbills were nesting along the larger channels in small colonies and egg sets of three or four were noted, and also young birds lately hatched. Herons were, strange to say, very scarce, the White-fronted and Pacific being met with, but no Egrets were seen. On the Cooper, after our return to the head station, we identified this species, also the Royal Spoonbill. The Brown-winged Wren was the common species seen in the lignum country and Wedge Bills were common. Young birds were everywhere under foot and in the channels, and could be picked up without much difficulty. When one considers the extent of this flooded country, the small portion of it that could be examined at all closely by a party of four, and the numbers seen, even in that small area, what an immense number of these water-fowl must be hatched out during each flood! Dingo tracks were plentiful in the mud, and an occasional fox's pad, but, even allowing for damage done by these marauders (and we saw very few signs of their successful hunting), there appears to be little danger of these species becoming exterminated.

At Bamoulah, as elsewhere in the trip, Honey-eaters were very scarce. With the exception of the ubiquitous Yellow-throated Minah, the Greenie, and an occasional Black and Spiney-cheeked Honey-eater, this family was very poorly represented. The Spoonbills' nests were lined with gum leaves, the Kites' nests appeared to have a layer of dried cow manure, and Whistling Eagles' always have gum leaves as a lining. Other birds noted here were Red-crowned Babblers, Zebra Finches—very plentiful—Campephagas—also plentiful—Galahs, Bare-eyed Cockatoos, Red-lored Pardalotes, Red-backed Kingfishers, Bee-eaters and Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoos.

On Tuesday, 28th, we noted a nest of the Little Grass Bird with four incubated eggs. Many Straw-necked Ibis were seen, but none were nesting here. A pair of Brolgas was met with also. Next day we left Bamoulah for Bilpa waterholes, and after a tedious journey, reached our camp beside a fine sheet of water of considerable depth. On the way I noted a pair of White-rumped Wood Swallows in possession of a deserted Magpie's nest.
