

Truly, the combination is not only remarkable, but also most distinctive.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to Messrs. Bullock and Orton for the opportunity of seeing something of the bird-life of Moora. In the few hours at our disposal we were taken by motor from place to place, saw something of the breeding-places of many of the water-birds and waders, and were told that lagoons similar to the two visited continued in a sort of string for fully 20 miles. What a happy hunting-ground for the bird-lover!

#### UPON THE MURCHISON.

BY J. W. MELLOR, SOMETIME PRESIDENT R.A.O.U.

As Mr. Ashby has dealt with the southern portion of the ornithological expedition undertaken by us in Western Australia, I shall deal with the farthest north—the Murchison River district.

Having dropped my co-worker from the train on the Watheroo sand-plain at mid-day, I continued the journey to Geraldton, and arrived there at midnight. By 6 p.m. next day the head of the railway line was reached at Ajana. This still left many miles to travel before the River Murchison could be reached. Happily, I found a friend in Mr. George Wyly, who had an interest in a mine on the Murchison, and Mr. Tom Johnston, who was "going that way" in a springcart. My luggage and self were soon stowed away, and the journey started through sand-plain and open country, with many beautiful flowers fit for any garden. Soon our way became rougher, and at times everyone and everything left the dray as we got into scrub country: the stones and ruts were bad, and the darkness intense. Quite unexpectedly we came upon a camp-fire in the scrub at the Block 7 Lead Mine, where I found another friend in need—Mr. W. F. Thring, a son of the well-known South Australian explorer—and we were soon discussing things, "parliamentary and otherwise," over a mug of steaming hot tea, which was most acceptable, as the night was bitterly cold, although the day had been intensely hot. Mr. Thring drove me that night to the Murchison, to the camp of Mr. Harry Leader, a part owner of the Boobee Copper Mine, where I received a hearty bush welcome, and it was midnight before I got to bunk under the shelter of an open tent and dreamed of the mighty flowing Murchison and the innumerable water-fowl impressions that were so soon to be shattered on the morrow, for, on forcing my way to the river next morning, I was surprised to find a rocky-bottomed course, dry but for occasional pools some 30 or 40 yards long, and saltier than the sea, the only water available for drinking purposes being a solitary soak, giving a few kerosene tins per day, or a little thick mud from the bottom of the copper mine. The day was scorching—considerably over 100 degrees in the shade, "if you could find it," as, for the most

part, the vegetation consisted of low acacias of various species, a few sandal-woods and jam-woods, all of small size, with here and there a currajong. However, the country was most interesting to the naturalist and ornithologist. I made as much of the time as possible. Bird-life was fairly plentiful both along the river-bed and out in the low scrub country which skirts it for miles on either side.

I wish here to record my heartiest thanks to those mentioned and others who so generously assisted me.

**Dromaius novæ-hollandiæ.** Emu.—Emus came in to the river to drink; tracks were numerous, but the birds were seldom seen. Once a somewhat dark specimen ran some distance before the cart and then made off across country.

**Ægialitis nigrifrons.** Black-fronted Dottrel.—Seen along the bed of the Murchison.

**Eupodotis australis.** Australian Bustard.—Several seen in the more open country.

**Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ.** White-fronted Heron.—A few seen along the pools of the Murchison.

**Anas superciliosa.** Black Duck.—Pairs noted here and there in the pools; they were very timid.

**Nettion gibberifrons.** Grey Teal.—In small lots on the narrow strips of water.

**Cerchneis cenchroides.** Nankeen Kestrel.—Several seen. One pair had young just out of a hollow limb of a small tree on the river bank. The old birds were feeding the young and warning and taking them on the wing to escape the intruder. They were of an exceptionally rusty-red colour, and may have been Milligan's sub-species (*C. c. unicolor*).

**Calyptrorhynchus banksi stellatus.** Red-tailed Cockatoo.—A few fine Black Cockatoos were flying over in the evening, but were wild and wary.

**Cacatua roseicapilla.** Rose-breasted Cockatoo.—A few were noted.

**Barnardius zonarius connectens.** Yellow-banded Parrot.—This form of the common "Port Lincoln Parrot" was seen along the Murchison. The birds were noisy and quarrelsome. Several young ones were flying with the old ones. They have the back and rump of a uniform green, and the yellow abdominal band not so bright as in the Port Lincoln Parrot.

**Halcyon pyrrhopygius.** Red-backed Kingfisher.—Several seen were uttering their usual plaintive notes.

**Merops ornatus.** Bee-eater.—In pairs in all situations.

**Hirundo neoxena.** Welcome Swallow.—Few about.

**Cheramœca leucosternum.** White-backed Swallow.—A few seen, and their nesting burrows noted on sand-banks.

**Smicrorhis flavescens.** Yellow-tinted Tree-Tit.—Few, in the small trees.

**Oreoleuca cristata.** Crested Bell-Bird.—Seen in the acacia scrub; their well-known notes of "Reep, reep, reephook" were heard.

**Campephaga humeralis.** White-shouldered Caterpillar-eater. — Scarce; only few seen.

**Geothlypis trichas pallidus.** Yellow-rumped Tit-Warbler. — A few seen in several places.

**Malurus splendens.** Banded Blue Wren-Warbler. — One male, in full livery, was seen, with several females. This may be Mathews's northern sub-species, *M. s. riordani*.

**Malurus cyanotus ocellatus.** White-winged Wren-Warbler. — First met on the Murchison, where I observed a male in three-quarter livery, and later a full-plumaged male at Geraldton, where they were very wary. They came out of the thick bush about sunset, but showed themselves very little. They are rare, and differ from South Australian birds in living in low bush country, and not amongst salt-bush and blue-bush country.

**Malurus lamberti occidentalis.** Variegated Wren-Warbler. — An exceedingly wary bird, especially the full-livered males. It was only after days of patient searching at Geraldton that I could settle the identity of the species. It seems to take the place of *M. elegans* of more southerly parts.

**Zosterops gouldi.** Green-backed Silver-eye. — Fairly common in all situations.

**Stigmatops ocellatus.** Brown Honey-eater. — This pretty-noted Honey-eater was observed several times.

**Ptilotis geraldtonensis.** Geraldton White-plumed Honey-eater. — Species new. This species, which we discovered, and which Mr. Ashby is describing as above, I first saw in the bed of the Murchison, and later in the bed of the Chapman River at Geraldton, when in company with Mr. Ashby. Its habits resembled those of the South Australian and Victorian sub-species (*P. p. whitei* and *P. p. mellori*). This bird, from description, resembles Mathews's *Ptilotula penicillata ladasi*, and may prove to be that sub-species.

**Anthochaera carunculata.** Red Wattle-Bird. — Only few seen.

**Acanthogenys ruficularis.** Spiny-cheeked Honey-eater. — Not common.

**Anthus australis.** Pipit. — Few on open land.

**Tanopygia castanotis.** Chestnut-eared Finch. — One pair seen drinking at a pool in the river bed.

**Corvus australis.** Raven. — A few birds which I believe were Ravens were seen.

**Strepera plumbea.** Leaden Bell-Magpie. — One pair seen; extremely shy and wary.

**Craictous leucopterus.** White-winged Butcher-Bird. — Noted along the river in company with young. Their beautiful, clear, silvery notes were often heard, especially in the early morning.

**Gymnorhina dorsalis.** Varied Magpie. — A few were seen, but not common, as in the south. The call is quite different from that of the nearly allied White-backed species. One of its call-notes resembles the double call of the Brown Hawk, uttered when flying. On several occasions I paused to make certain that the call was not made by a Hawk.