

## Birds of Rottnest Island, W.A.

By ALAN G. KILPATRICK, R.A.O.U., Perth, W.A.

A prominent feature of Rottnest Island is the prolific bird life, and the writer recently had the opportunity of closely studying the birds which, during December and January, abound there. Rottnest Island is of particular interest to ornithologists, in that it is one of the most southern points to which birds of the Northern Hemisphere migrate. It is at Rottnest where such birds as Sandpipers, Snipe and Dotterel may be found during certain periods of the year, and these, together with the birds indigenous to Australia, make the island a "happy hunting ground" for bird lovers.

It is perhaps desirable to describe briefly the history of the island, together with the geographical and geological features. It is situate in the Indian Ocean (Lat. 32° S., Long. 115° 30' E.) about 12 miles from Fremantle. It was named in 1696 by the Dutch explorer, William van Vlaming, who found, on exploring the island, a large number of nests which he considered to be the nests of large rats [wallabies]. Geologically, it consists mainly of limestone covered with sandy soil. A number of outlying reefs exist, with small rocky islets. The island has a rocky shore, with jagged outcrops of limestone falling back to grassy sandhills and a low scrub, consisting of wattle and jam trees sloping down to hollows containing salt lakes. The rocky islets on the reefs are the nesting places of sea-birds, while the main island is the feeding ground and resting place of many migrating birds. The salt lakes are the feeding grounds of all kinds of sea-birds and waders.

The following birds were observed:—

*Puffinus pacificus*. Wedge-tailed Shearwater (Mutton Bird).—Found at the west end in burrows containing young. The parents would not move from the nests until lifted out by hand.

*Hydroprogne caspia*. Caspian Tern.—Not common. Sometimes seen at sunset around the lakes. Very timid.

*Sterna bergii*. Crested Tern.—Commonly seen flying round the salt lakes. It is becoming tame.

*Sterna anætheta*. Bridled Tern.—Often seen obtaining food for their young which were to be found in the nests on outlying rocks. Fairly tame.

*Sterna nerëis*. Fairy Tern.—Nesting on the shores of one of the salt lakes. About 200 nests were situated there, but unfortunately, most of them were destroyed by vandals.

*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*. Silver Gull.—Many birds in both mature and immature plumage were to be seen on the salt lakes. These birds nest in September on the islands south of Rottnest.

*Hæmatopus ostralegus*. Pied Oyster-catcher.—In the company of Sandpipers and Dotterels, three of these birds were seen at sundown on the shores of one of the lakes.

*Charadrius ruficapillus*. Red-capped Dotterel.—Found feeding around the salt lakes and nesting on secluded beaches. Four nests found containing young and heavily-incubated eggs.

*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*. Banded Stilt.—Found feeding in small companies of two or three. They were very timid.

*Erolia acuminata*. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.—Could often be seen in small companies of six or seven feeding around the margins of the salt lakes.

*Casarca tadornoides*. Chestnut-breasted Shelduck.—Found in large companies on the west coast. They were very timid, having evidently been frightened or chased.

*Phalacrocorax fuscescens*. White-breasted Cormorant.—Nesting in small colonies. Although most nests contained young birds, fresh eggs were also prevalent.

*Falco cenchroides*. Nankeen Kestrel.—Only two seen, but they were quite tame and easy to observe.

*Neophema petrophila*. Rock Parrot.—This bird was very common and found in flocks of many dozens. It was very tame and easy to observe while it was feeding.

*Halcyon sanctus*. Sacred Kingfisher.—Rather rare, only two seen and they were very timid.

*Cuculus pallidus*. Pallid Cuckoo.—This bird was also rare, only one being seen. Three were heard amongst the thick scrub.

*Hirundo neoxena*. Welcome Swallow.—The commonest bird on the island. Found nesting in caves, on rocks, on houses, and under jetties.

*Petroica goodenovii*. Red-capped Robin.—Very tame around the camp, becoming a frequent visitor. Five nests discovered within a quarter of a mile of the settlement. All except one contained young.

*Rhipidura leucophrys*. Black and White Fantail (Wagtail).—Only two seen and those were very tame as usual.

*Epthianura albifrons*. White-fronted Chat.—Very common and fairly tame. One could not walk through the bush without disturbing a Chat. Seven nests found in low bushes about 70 yards from the edge of the salt lake. All contained young.

*Zosterops australasiae*. Western Silvereye.—Many on the island and were to be heard everywhere. Many old nests discovered, but all the young had flown. An addled egg was found in one nest.

*Meliphaga virescens*. Singing Honeyeater.—Common and very tame. Found on all parts of the island. They often came to the camp to pick up scraps, to which they were by no means averse. Two nests containing young were found.

*Corvus coronoides*. Raven.—In the absence of guns, these birds have become very tame, and are very useful as scavengers amongst the rubbish left by campers.

Notable for their absence were Thornbills (*Acanthiza*), their place being taken by Chats and Silvereyes. Evidently they will not cross the sea and did not establish themselves before Rottnest became an island.

Amongst other birds which have been introduced are Peacocks, Pheasants and the Turtle Dove, all of which have become very common.

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## Rare Visitors

By E. A. R. LORD, R.A.O.U., Murphy's Creek, Qld.

The Murphy's Creek district is situated about eighty miles, by air line, from Moreton Bay, and about twelve miles, by air line, from Toowoomba. We are at the foot of the eastern slope of the Great Dividing Range, and near the head of the Murphy's Creek, which is the main branch of the Lockyer, which in its turn empties into the Brisbane River. Being so near the head of the creek, we have no large