

## The White-throated Honeyeater in New South Wales

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The range of the White-throated Honeyeater (*Melithreptus albogularis*) is given in the R.A.O.U. *Checklist* (1926, p. 94) as south-eastern New Guinea, northern Australia and eastern Queensland; and by Gregory M. Mathews (1930, p. 736) as New Guinea, north-west Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. In neither work is New South Wales included in the distribution of this species. As far back as 1905, however, A. J. North recorded (1905, p. 395) having received three specimens in flesh, and a nest, from Copmanhurst, Clarence River, north-eastern New South Wales. In 1907 North again mentioned these three specimens, and also two clutches of eggs taken at Copmanhurst by George Savidge in November 1897, and August 1901 respectively (1907, pp. 184-5).

J. A. Keast, in his recent notes on the birds of the Tweed River district (1944, p. 185), refers to the above three skins. In view of the importance of New South Wales records, particulars of all such specimens at present in the Australian Museum collection are given below.

O.14272	sk.	Copmanhurst, Clarence River, N.S.W.	Sept. 1905
O.14273	sk.	do.	do.
O.14275	sk.	do.	
O.14919	mtd.	do.	Nov. 1905
O.14920	mtd.	do.	do.
O.14921	sk.	do.	do.
O.14922	sk.	do.	do.
O.14923	sk.	do.	do.
O.17246	♀sk.	Richmond River, N.S.W. No date; ex 'Dobroyde' collection, purchased 1912.	

Specimen O.17246 is labelled '*Melithreptus lunulatus*, ♀, Richmond River,' but is correctly registered (as '*Melithreptus albigularis*'). Nos. O.14919 and O.14920 are mounted and are on exhibition in the public galleries of the Museum, together with the nest mentioned by North in 1905, the registered number of which is O.14274. The remaining seven specimens are skins in the reference collection.

Thus there are nine skins in the Australian Museum from north-eastern New South Wales and there should be no doubt as to the occurrence of the species in that State.

The White-throated Honeyeater closely resembles the Lunulated or White-naped Honeyeater (*M. lunatus*) but differs from that species principally in the richer olive-yellow of the upper parts and in the lesser amount of black on the sides of the head and which extends down only to the base of the upper mandible. In *lunatus* the black extends to the base of the lower mandible. The bare skin above and behind the eyes is stated to be dull greenish-blue (1907,

p. 184) : it is orange-red in *lunatus*. The above characters are constant and there is no evidence of intergradation. Mathews (1930, p. 736) treats *albogularis* as a subspecies of *lunatus*.

The reference cited by Keast under *M. albogularis* actually refers to the Crested Tern; the correct citation should read vol. II, pt. 2, July 1907, p. 184, not vol. IV, pt. 4, June 1914, p. 318. The latter reference is correctly used on page 180 of his notes. The name 'G. Savage' quoted on page 185 in the same paper should read 'G. Savidge.' The term 'occipital ring' (page 148) should read 'orbital ring' and in the species in question the author, I think, refers to the small area of bare scarlet flesh above and behind the eye, but which does not entirely surround it.

## REFERENCES

1905. North, A. J. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.*, vol. XXX, p. 395.  
1907. North, A. J. *Nests and Eggs of Birds found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania*, vol. II, pt. 2, July, pp. 184-5.  
1926. *Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia*, R.A.O.U. (2nd ed.), p. 94.  
1930. Mathews, Gregory M. *Systema Avium Australasianarum*, pt. 2, p. 736.  
1944. Keast, J. A. *The Emu*, vol. XLIII, pt. 3, January, pp. 184-5.

**White-throated Honeyeater.**—In Mr. J. A. Keast's interesting article on the birds of the Tweed River district, (*Emu*, vol. 43, p. 177) he refers to my having stated that I believed that both *Melithreptus lunatus* and *M. albogularis* were present in my district. I was of the opinion that *M. lunatus* was our common species, but since discovering definitely that *M. albogularis* does occur here I am impressed with the view that it is the more plentiful. I believe that Mr. Mathews considers *albogularis* a subspecies of *lunatus*. If that be so, then, although theoretically subspecies do not dwell together, there are some districts where the limits come together and overlap, and maybe this area (and a little southwards) constitutes such a locality.

Months had passed before I had the opportunity of identifying my bird. I was rewarded on March 19, 1944, when a number of birds were seen feeding in low brush. The birds were extremely tame and one pair came to within three feet of where I stood. The pale blue line above the eye was sufficient to satisfy me that the birds were White-throated Honeyeaters. Since that date I have seen many birds, at close range, feeding with other honeyeaters.

I did not know the name of the shrub that was attracting the birds, though it appeared to be of the *Grevillea* group. Through Messrs. G. H. Barker and C. T. White (Government Botanist) I have been advised that the plant is *Grevillea arenaria*, var. *canescens*. This is one of the common shrubs here, but apparently it had not been previously known to occur in Queensland.—E. A. R. LORD, Murphy's Creek, Queensland, 7/5/44.