

## Notes on Birds seen on a recent trip up the Diamantina River near the Queensland Border

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I left Mungeranie on January 9th for a trip up the Diamantina River. The weather was extremely hot at the time, 118 in the shade on the day that I left Mungeranie, and I think it got hotter as I got farther north. I camped the first night at Kirrawadna Creek, and was interested in watching a number of Blue Wrens (White-winged Superb-Warblers) that were nesting near where I had made my camp. Although it was after sundown when I arrived, they were still busy seeking food, and kept on till some time after dark. On the next day at Mirra Mitta I saw dozens of the Australian Dotterel—these were wading about in the shallow waters of the bore stream. There were very few birds on the stream, but I think the hot weather had driven them to somewhere where they could get shade. This night I camped at Kinnenbar Creek. The saltbush and cane grass here was full of the nests of the Orange-fronted Chat. There must have been hundreds of nests, every one that I looked into had young in it. These birds were getting water from a number of shallow holes in the creek bed.

Very few birds were seen after this until I got to Andrewilla, on the Eleanor River, but even here the numbers were nothing to what they would be in the cooler weather. I saw a few Galahs and Corellas, perhaps a dozen Yellow-billed Spoonbills, one Royal Spoonbill, and about a dozen Channel-bill Cuckoos. These latter were evidently fighting with some crows for their nests, as they made a lot of squabbling. A blackfellow who accompanied me on the trip reckoned that they were trying to tell us there was a flood coming, but he observed: "I don't know what they make so much row about; perhaps they forget when the flood come."

Many Boobook Owls were heard at night at this camp, and a few Pelicans were seen, all single birds.

I did not see many birds at Clifton Hills, but noticed one new to me. This was a cormorant of some sort. It swam very low in the water, and dived at the slightest movement that I made. It had a buff-coloured neck and head, and I think a darker stripe down the back of the neck; but I could not get a good look at it. It was close to the camp for two days, but I could not frighten it out of the water to get a look at its body. A few Diamond Doves were seen here, and numerous Crows.

I camped at Andrewilla on my return trip, and found that about twenty Mountain Ducks had come to the water during my absence. At Goyder's Lagoon I saw a few Australian Pratincoles, and a few Australian Dotterels. At this place a

wild dog (dingo) got up from under the shade of a rock and calmly walked across in front of my horses, not five yards in front of my saddle horse. It then waited until I had passed, and then went back to its scrape under the rock. It was miserably poor, and covered with mange.

At Mount Gason on the following morning two Black-backed Magpies landed in the verandah of the house, where we were sitting. They were so exhausted that they had barely strength to flutter up on to a table out of the way of the dogs. After a rest one of them fluttered into an open doorway, but the other stayed on the table. We put some water down for it, but it seemed too far gone to drink. It stayed there all the morning. It was blowing a sandstorm on this morning. I left Mount Gason after dinner, and made for Kinnenbar, where I expected to find water still, but on arrival there I found all the claypans had been filled up with the sand. I had plenty of water for my own use, but had none for the horses. After tea I was lying on my swag idly smoking and watching the embers of the fire, when an Australian Dotterel walked right up to within two feet of me. It went right round the fire and over to the canteen, where some water had been spilt. It scratched around for a little while, when it was joined by another. I got up to put out some water for them, and startled a turkey that was only about ten yards away. It was just within the glow of the fire. In the morning I had a look at the nests of the Orange-fronted Chats, and found many young birds that would not be able to fly for some time. I wondered whether these would die or whether the old birds could fly the fifteen miles to the nearest water, and so keep them alive. Travelling along on this morning an Orange-fronted Chat flew on to the neck of one of the pack horses, and hung on to its mane for a couple of hundred yards. It was very nearly exhausted; its beak was open, and one could nearly hear its panting. It fell off the pack horse and laid on the ground until we were about twenty yards away, when it fluttered after us again, and this time it settled on the neck of my riding horse. It was too weak to get a good grip, but it travelled along for some distance, half holding, half fluttering. I managed to get it in to within about three hundred yards of the water, when it left me. Coming along I saw a Kite Hawk drop dead; it was flying to cross over in front of me about twenty yards up in the air, and about fifty yards in front, when it collapsed and dropped like a stone. It was lying on its back, quite dead, when I passed.

The heat was terrible on this day. It was just as much as one could stand, and the horses were simply wet with sweat, which was dripping off them. It came on to blow another dust-storm in the afternoon, which, I am afraid, would settle all the baby chats at Kinnenbar.