

chicks, as late feeding did not happen until the chicks were three weeks old.

From observations so far made of the habits of the Little Blue Penguin, I am forced to the conclusion that not until these birds have been studied over a lengthy period will it be possible to establish definitely their general habits, particularly those relating to the rearing of their young.

Birds at Lake Midgeon

By A. J. ELLIOTT, Cambewarra, New South Wales

At the termination of the 1939 R.A.O.U. Camp at Leeton several of us proceeded to Lake Midgeon, near Narrandera. A number of birds was seen that had not been observed at or around the camp, and a brief account of such species follows. The party then returned to Leeton and revisited some of the swamps. A note or two on birds seen there are also included.

Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*).—A party of five (at least) frequented a small lagoon on Midgeon Station, but showed no indication of nesting during our stay.

Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*).—A pair was seen flying past at Tuckerbil Swamp, Leeton, on October 2, 1939.

Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*).—One party of over twenty birds frequented the vicinity of one lagoon on Midgeon, and a few birds were noted elsewhere thereabouts.

Avocet (*Recurvirostra novæ-hollandiæ*).—A few pairs were nesting on small islands in a lagoon near Lake Midgeon. On the closer to the shore of a pair of islets there were two nests with four eggs each, and also one stray egg. On the other islet there were three nests; the young hatched in one of these before we left, although laying had not been completed in another when first observed. A brood of young was also seen and photographed on the margin of the swamp, but we failed to locate the nest in which they had hatched. A further nest was a mile or more from these groups on an islet at the far end of the swamp. This bird resembles the Stilt in habits but is much more versatile, being equally at home in air, water or on land.

Australian Snipe (*Gallinago hardwicki*).—A solitary bird was observed on the edge of a lagoon on Midgeon Station on September 24.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*).—Mr. Ellis McNamara located one nest near the margin of Lake Midgeon; it held well-grown young.

White-necked Heron (*Notophojx pacifica*).—A few nests, with eggs, were located in the lake close to the homestead on Midgeon Station.

Maned Goose (*Chenonetta jubata*).—Numerous about Lake Midgeon, where parties of up to about fifty were seen.

Grey Teal (*Querquedula gibberifrons*).—Numerous about the lake and lagoons on Midgeon Station. During the course of a short row on the lake one afternoon a party of us located three nests in hollows within a few feet of the water. At one the sitting bird refused to flush, although the hollow was barely deep enough to prevent our reaching the bird with our hands. At the second, the bird did not leave until we were alongside, whilst the bird was absent from the third nest. The following day Mr. G. Miller rowed out again and located three more nests, the actions of the birds corresponding with those of the previous day. Nine appeared to be the popular number of eggs for the clutch.

Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*).—Quite a few pairs about the swamps near Lake Midgeon, some being attended by broods of young.

Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*).—What was undoubtedly an immature bird was seen near the homestead of Midgeon Station on September 24. Its chest was conspicuously marked with buff, the crown was greyish-buff and it differed from the mature colouring in other respects. It was surprisingly trustful. On our return to Stanbridge Swamp, Leeton, on October 2, Ellis McNamara and I located a nest, 30 feet up in a green gum tree, near the swamp. It held two pinkish-brown eggs blotched with darker colouring—there may have been more, as a branch in front prevented my seeing the contents clearly. It was lined with dry leaves which had obviously been green when placed there.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).—On September 27 a bird considered as of this species dived at speed above a lagoon on Midgeon Station, passing close to a "hide" from which W. Moore and I were photographing a Stilt, and passed on, but Ellis McNamara told us later that it had immediately returned and dived at ducks in the lagoon without striking any. The following day the bird (apparently the same one) was again seen when it was identified as of this species.

Galah (*Kakatoë roseicapilla*).—I was interested to see, in Lake Midgeon, trees bearing patches where bark had been nibbled off, apparently by Galahs, which were plentiful there. The nibbling appeared to have been carried out some weeks previously. In one case it could be distinctly seen where a tree, not long dead, had been ring-barked by this nibbling. In another case bark had been eaten off a particular spot on one tree annually for four or five years, being eaten back further each year. The wood growing over the previous scars was plainly visible. There were no signs of hollows in the vicinity of most of these spots.



Young Avocets.

Photo. by Norman Chaffer.



White-necked Heron at nest.

Photo. by A. J. Elliott.

Blue-bonnet Parrot (*Psephotus hæmatogaster*).—A few were seen on Midgeon at different places.

Cockatiel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*).—On our second visit to Stanbridge Swamp, on October 2, McNamara and I found that these were numerous in the dry timber in the swamp and appeared to be occupied with selecting hollows rather than actually nesting.

Tree-Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*).—During a row in a boat on Lake Midgeon, on September 28, we saw these birds entering hollows in different trees.

Red-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla albiventris*).—A few miles out from the homestead on Midgeon Station McNamara saw a few birds of this species in dense pine scrub. As there was no undergrowth in the vicinity, it appears that here the birds must live in the dense pine scrubs.

Purple-backed Wren (*Malurus assimilis*).—McNamara reported that this form was common in undergrowth a few miles out on Midgeon Station. Their habitat was the clumps of wonga vine growing about and amongst the large boulders around that particular spot.

Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*).—A few miles out from the homestead on Midgeon Station, on September 30, McNamara was watching a bird in thick pine scrub when one of these Honeyeaters flew into the tree that he was observing, so that he obtained a good view excepting for the tail, which was hidden by a limb. Its yellow wings, streaked chest and black upper parts were noticed. Mr. Frank Austin told me that on the previous day he had watched some strange Honeyeaters near the station sheep-dip, which he is now confident were referable to this species. He had not previously recorded it for the district, which suggests that it is rare there. One would have thought that such would scarcely be the case.

Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*).—One seen on Midgeon Station; there may have been a pair present, but we could not be sure. Mr. Austin told us that it was common in favoured spots in the district.

Olive-backed Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*).—McNamara saw one a few miles out on Midgeon Station. It is surprising that it had not been observed earlier.

Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*).—A few miles out on Midgeon Station, on September 30, McNamara saw two in thick pine scrub. Although he was in their vicinity for an hour or so he did not hear them call, but he considered that they were distinctly paler and dirtier in appearance than coastal birds. Mr. Frank Austin told me that they must have been stragglers, as the species is not usually seen about there, excepting in the autumn and winter months.