

## Birds at Quilpie, Western Queensland

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While on a visit recently to the Quilpie district, I had opportunities for observing many beautiful birds, and consider that a few notes on them might be of interest. The most important of my "finds" was news of the Night Parrot. I did not actually see this rare species, but, from reliable information, I found that it has been seen several times in the spinifex country bordering the Cooper. It is usually seen at night, in the light of the headlamps of a car. Apparently it favours open spaces at night, for it is most often seen on cleared roads and claypans.\* The Chestnut-breasted Quail-Thrush (*Cinclosoma castaneothorax*) is another of the rare inhabitants. I met it once only, in thick mulga scrub, and found it exceedingly difficult to stalk.

The birds of prey are unusually well represented. I noted only one Owl (*Ninox boobook*), which was fairly plentiful; it appears to feed on a species of marsupial mouse which abounds in the district. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is often seen, and occasionally breeds in the district. Square-tailed and Fork-tailed Kites are very common: they do a great deal of good by eating the carcasses of dead sheep, etc., in which the injurious sheep-fly breeds in great numbers. Both species are quite tame, and the curious whistling cry of the former is often heard. The Brown Hawk and the Australian Goshawk are both common; they appear to prey chiefly on small birds, such as Budgerygahs, Miners, etc. The Kestrel is uncommon, perhaps the most uncommon Raptor in the district. The beautiful and fearless Falcons and the Sparrowhawk find an easy living in a district teeming with bird life. I once watched a Sparrowhawk stooping at a Budgerygah just before sundown. The Parrot seemed to lose its head completely and flew straight ahead in the open, although quite close to a thick belt of scrub. It soon fell a prey to its bold antagonist, which in its turn was attacked by a Brown Hawk, though without success. The Peregrine Falcon is not very plentiful; it probably nests in holes in some of the hills, which have almost perpendicular faces. The Little Falcon likewise is not common, but appears to be evenly distributed.

I watched a pair of Black Falcons for several days. We were droving a large mob of sheep at the time, and the wily Falcons soon discovered that the sheep disturbed numbers of Quail. I saw them catch numbers of Quail in this way every day, and practically never miss. They appeared to be jealous of each other's success, and always disputed their prey for some minutes. The ease of their wheeling flight as

\*Further investigation of this report is desirable.—Ed.

they search the ground from a considerable height is as remarkable as it is typical of this species. One Quail which killed itself in a fence while endeavouring to escape proved to be of the Red-chested species. Stubble Quail were also present.

A pair of Grey Falcons showed themselves to be equal opportunists. One day, while shooting Ducks, I noticed a pair of these Falcons, which were making no attempt to molest the Ducks. They knew at once, however, when one of the latter was wounded. They chased one for a hundred yards or so, when it fell dead in the bed of a dry water-course. When I went to pick it up about half an hour later, I found little more than feathers remaining.

The Ducks also form a large group. On one waterhole I saw a flock which I estimated at about 20,000 birds, amongst which I noticed Black Ducks, Wood Ducks, Pink-eared Ducks, Whistling Tree Ducks, Freckled Ducks, Grey Teal. There were probably several others. In very wet seasons the district is sometimes visited by Pigmy Geese from the "Territory". The Channel-Bill Cuckoo is seen occasionally, and an egg was found some years ago in the nest of a Magpie-Lark. This seems to be a hitherto-unrecorded foster-parent. Besides these, many other fine birds are to be met with. Painted Snipe, Brolgas, Bustards, several kinds of Cockatoo (including the Little Corella), Bourke Parrots, Spotted Nightjars, Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Crimson and Orange Chats, Purple-backed Wrens, Crested Bellbirds, White-browed Tree-creepers, Wedgebills, the two species of Crow and the Raven, with others too numerous to mention, go to make up the avine population. I noted in all 108 species. This was in the middle of winter, and only one species (*Chenopsis atrata*) was then nesting.

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**Satin Bower-birds and the Painting of their Bowers.**—In the *Bulletin of the New York Zoological Society* (Vol. XXXV, No. 2, 1932) is an article on the habits of Satin Bower-birds by Charles Barrett. In the same journal additional notes are published by Lee S. Crandall, Curator of birds in the New York Zoological Park, on the habits of the species in captivity. The following remarks, extracted therefrom, and dealing with the painting of the bower, are of particular interest to Australian workers for they coincide with field observations recently published in *The Emu*, (Vol. XXX, 1931, pp. 282-3):—

"In February, 1922, a keeper called my attention to the antics of a satin bower-bird which followed him about the aviary, nibbling at the soft wood of a sieve the man was using. I watched the bird for some time and finally discovered that the particles of wood were