

grained, smooth and lustreless, measuring about .8 by .5 inch. Others, less common, are of a compressed oval shape with a zone of minute black spots at the larger end.

Black-breasted Buzzards Near Melbourne.—It is rarely that southern Victoria is visited by birds confined to the interior of Australia, but on November 16, 1930, a pair of Black-breasted Buzzards (*Hamirostra melanosterna*) was seen in the vicinity of Lilydale, which lies 24 miles east of Melbourne. When first seen from a distance they were flying high, and I regarded them as Swamp Harriers (*Circus approximans*), as a pair of these birds had nested in the locality a few years previously. After a time one of the birds descended low enough for a hill to be in the background, and it was then noticed that its plumage instead of being brown was black. Eventually both birds came sailing overhead, and it was then that they were definitely recognised as Buzzards by the conspicuous white patches under the wings. For over half-an-hour they remained in view, keeping close together, and soaring in circles, usually at a great height from the ground; then suddenly they disappeared in a northerly direction. They appeared to be very powerful fliers, as there was a strong north wind blowing, which they could travel against with hardly a movement of the wings.

The wide variation in the plumage of these birds has often been commented upon by ornithological writers. Specimens range from brown to black. These two birds were very dark in appearance, which suggested that they were old birds. It was also noticed, as the birds passed overhead, that the centre tail feathers were slightly longer than the outer ones, although one important work on Australian ornithology states that the tail is "practically square." Owing to the tail feathers of all the specimens in the Melbourne Museum being badly worn at the tips, I am unable to verify this statement as being of general application.

Lilydale is by no means the most southern limit from which this bird has been recorded. In *The Emu*, Vol. XVII, page 103, the late Colonel W. V. Legge reported that in November, 1916, he had seen a single specimen pass over his homestead in Tasmania, flying in a north-easterly direction. It is quite likely that on rare occasions these birds come into Victoria, especially in the north-west corner of the State, where, I understand, one was shot a few years ago. In the collection in the Melbourne National Museum there are two specimens collected long ago in the vicinity of Swan Hill, which is on the northern boundary of Victoria.—D. J. DICKISON, R.A.O.U., Melbourne, Victoria.