

Notes on the Birds of Crawley, Perth, in the Early 'Nineties

By O. H. LIPFERT, Perth, Western Australia

At the request of Dr. D. L. Serventy, who is working on the aquatic birds of the area around Pelican Point, Crawley, on the Swan River estuary, I have prepared the following few notes on the status of some of the land birds which attracted my attention when I first became acquainted with the area in the early 'nineties of last century. At that time there were no buildings around the river in that locality, except Sir George Shenton's house—a fine example of colonial architecture, with an old-world garden—and the Swan Brewery. On the Nedlands side of the Point was Gallop's old orchard. Over the river, on the South Perth side, there were only the old mill, dating from 1835, and a few small buildings. Applecross and Canning Bridge had no houses at all, and at Lucky Bay was a deserted farm. Now all those areas are residential suburbs of Perth, and Crawley in particular has been almost completely transformed. The old home of the Shentons is now part of the University, the grounds of which extend over 160 acres of the area. Gallop's orchard has been largely built over and the foreshore at Crawley has been quite cleared of the paperbarks (*Melaleuca*) and "sheoak" which in the old days provided harbour for the bush birds. Further back from the shore the bush was composed of jarrah, red gum and *Banksia* of the type which still survives in a small patch to the west of the old Shenton house. Another great change took place in 1936, when the last of the extensive series of salt swamps, with their samphire margins, which lined the western shore of Pelican Point, were filled in, preparatory to being turned into a recreation reserve. Crawley was usually visited from Perth by rowing-boat in the days of which I speak, and the craft would be beached safely anywhere, the day being devoted without care to collecting and observing ashore.

Many of the birds may still be seen in the area, and as King's Park is not far away and the University authorities have embarked on an ambitious scheme of beautifying the grounds, bush birds should never entirely forsake the locality. Of the birds that have gone, it seems for ever, I recall the White-naped Honeyeater (*Melithreptus lunatus*). That species was quite abundant and bred freely. Also very plentiful was the Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*)—there is now no watery habitat for it. The Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga ornata*), still to be met with on the Limekilns Estate, a few miles to the north-west of Perth, also used to be seen in the eucalypt

areas at Crawley. Another vanished form is the Banded Blue Wren (*Malurus splendens*), which nested there. It is not now to be found in the immediate environs of Perth, so far as I know, but does occur in some private gardens not far out, as for instance, at Guildford. If the Red-winged Wren (*Malurus elegans*) ever occurred there it had gone before my time. Mr. C. Ostle and I obtained a specimen for the Western Australian Museum at Herdsman's Lake in January, 1901, but I have not seen any there since. The bird vanishes rapidly before clearing and settlement. A similar fate befalls the Rufous Tree-creeper (*Climacteris rufa*). I never saw it myself around Crawley, but it was to be observed, although rarely, across the river at Applecross. Now one must go to the Darling Range to meet with it. Rosellas (*Platycercus icterotis*), Twenty-eight Parrots (*Barnardius semitorquatus*) and Red-capped or King Parrots (*Purpureicephalus spurius*) also occasionally occurred. I remember single records of the Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*), the Mistletoe-bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) and a Bronze-wing Pigeon (sp.).

Some of the birds that still occur in the area include the Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*), which flocks abundantly when the eucalypts are in flower. The Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) is a regular visitor. The Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) was fairly common and much more so than the Rufous-breasted species (*P. rufiventris*). The Grey-breasted Shrike-Robin (*Eopsaltria griseogularis*) was a regular inhabitant, but it is less common now. The Brown Honeyeater (*Gliciphila indistincta*), the notes of which so often used to delude me into thinking there were Reed-Warblers about, was fairly common.

I do not propose to say anything about the water-birds, as I have nothing to add to the species now being recorded by Dr. Serventy. I may mention, however, that one summer at Pelican Point I obtained a Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*), which (as it was before my association with the Museum) was sent home to the museum of my old school, at Poesseck, in Thuringia. The species was not included in the list of birds of the Swan River district by W. B. Alexander in *The Emu* (vol. xx, p. 149), but Dr. Serventy subsequently recorded it.

The Purple Gallinule.—The Bald Coot, Eastern Swamp-hen or Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio melanotus*) inhabits the reedy margins of creeks and waterways, and swamps thickly overgrown with vegetation. Until recent years numbers of birds frequented the lagoons of Centennial Park, Sydney.