



# The Tasmanian Naturalist

NO. 44

FEBRUARY, 1976

Registered at the G. P. O. Hobart, Tasmania, for transmission by post as a periodical

Supplement to the Bulletin of Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club

Editor : D. G. Thomas

Annual Subscription \$2.00

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## WEST COAST BIRDS ISSUE

### AVIAN FAUNA OF THE CROTTY AREA

P. Fielding, O. M. G. Newman, and R. W. Rose

#### INTRODUCTION:

This report presents the findings of surveys carried out between Mar. 1974 and Oct. 1975 of the avifauna in an area of central Western Tasmania to the east of Macquarie Harbour.

At the turn of the century the study area contained a thriving mining industry with sizeable townships at Crotty, Darwin and Kelly Basin. Today the area is virtually unpopulated with mining operations confined to the Queenstown district and areas to its north.

The West and South of Tasmania have received scant ornithological investigation in the past because of the rugged terrain, inaccessibility and the remoteness of such areas from the major centres of population in Tasmania, namely Hobart and Launceston. Green and Mollison (1961) discussed the birds of the South-West near Port Davey and Jackson et al (1975) included a bird list for the North-West (Norfolk Range). Thomas and Wall (1972) described the birds of Lake Pedder, prior to the creation of the enlarged lake.

Today the West and South-West of Tasmania are under some environmental pressure from hydro-electric power development. Some of the area reported on herein may be flooded in the future, a fact which has provided motivation for the present study.

Two separate organisations took part, the Bird Observers' Association of Tasmania (B. O. A. T.) and the Zoology Department of the University of Tasmania. The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the following individuals who made records available: G. Bromfield, R. Mawbey, Mrs. A. V. Ratkowsky, N. A. Sheppard, D. G. Thomas and L. E. Wall. One of the members of the survey team (R. W. R.) was in receipt of a research grant from the University of Tasmania.

#### SCOPE OF THE STUDY :

Observations were made predominantly around the Kelly Basin and Franklin River Roads from about 3 km north of the Lyell Hwy. to the Hydro-Electric Commission

camp at the Franklin River. Other areas investigated included a swamp on the flats adjacent to the King River immediately to the south of the Lyell Hwy., the Crotty area and the track along the East Jukes spur, the beginning of the Fincham Track to Frenchmans Cap, the Kelly Basin track from the Nora River to Kelly Basin at Pillinger, and a track to the meteorite crater in the Andrew River basin.

Although observations were made predominantly in the vicinity of roads and walking tracks it is thought that coverage was realistic. The area was visited at all seasons and considerable time was spent in each habitat type. Some areas received intensive coverage, in particular around the Lyell Hwy. bridge over the King River and near Township Creek.

Observations involved approximately 100 man-hours.

#### HABITAT :

The West Coast is a high rainfall area with falls of 250 cm/annum being not uncommon. As a consequence of this, the climatic climax vegetation is temperate rainforest (Jackson 1965). However, one finds a variety of habitats reflecting not only climate but also varying soil fertilities, degrees of firing, clearing activities as well as altitude (the region studied extends from Kelly Basin at sea-level to Mt. McCall, 760 m)

In areas of frequent firing sedgeland is the predominant vegetation. Bordering sedgeland one finds wet scrub which is also present on the banks of creeks and rivers traversing the sedgeland. In areas of less frequent firing mixed forest is to be found. Mixed forest and wet sclerophyll are both common West Coast habitats. At higher altitudes moorland becomes the predominant vegetation. The habitat can be described as cold-wet adapted.

In much of the area south of the Lyell Highway to about 3 km past Township Creek, firing, milling and lack of regrowth (except at the banks of creeks) has led to a large hummock sedgeland. The predominant species in this area are Gymnoschoenus, Carpha, Juncus and Restio. In the wet scrub bordering creeks and in better drained areas one finds the Peppermint Gum and Tea-tree. The southern limit of this sedgeland merges into mixed forest which predominates along the Kelly Basin Road until it forks into the Kelly Basin track and the Franklin River Road. Along the Franklin River Road can be found rainforest, mixed forest, wet sclerophyll and on some of the slopes almost pure stands of tea-tree. As the road rises, the predominant vegetation becomes moorland. In contrast, relatively undisturbed rainforest exists along the whole length of the Kelly Basin track.

Swamp is found just south of the Lyell Highway, including several acres of spiked reed (probably Juncus). Much of the area north of the Lyell Highway is cleared land used in the past for grazing now discontinued. It has been fired recently and there are large stands of black wattle.

#### Anotated Species List

Distances from Lyell Highway refer to roads either following the King River to the north or leading to the Hydro-Electric Commission camp at the Franklin River to the south (The Kelly Basin Road). The Kelly Basin track refers to the track from the H. E. C. gate on the Kelly Basin Road at the Nora River to Kelly Basin at Pillinger.

## Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Present Kelly Basin Jun. and Nov. and observed soaring over Lyell Highway near Nelson Creek west of King River. Almost certainly frequents rivers in area, although not observed.

## White-faced Heron

Ardea novaehollandiae

One seen near Crotty in Mar. 1975 was the only record

Anas species

2 duck on King River near the Lyell Highway in Nov. appeared to be Grey Teal Anas gibberifrons.

## Australian Goshawk

Accipiter fasciatus

1 Mt. Fincham area Mar. 1974.

## Wedge-tailed Eagle

Aquila audax

Single birds seen on Darwin Plateau at 600 m in Mar. 1975 and at Township Creek in Mar. 1974.

## Swamp Harrier

Circus approximans

A single bird present near Crotty in Nov. 1974.

## Brown Hawk

Falco berigora

Single birds present Crotty area Mar. 1974 and 1975.

## Brown Quail

Synoicus ypsilophorus

3 flushed on flats near junction of King River and Lyell Highway in Mar. 1974. Present at Crotty in Oct. 1975.

## Lewin Water Rail

Rallus pectoralis

1 seen in Nov. 1974 between Baxter Rivulet and the Kelly Basin Road.

## Japanese Snipe

Gallinago hardwickii

Present Nov. 1974 near King River north of the Lyell Hwy.

## Brush Bronzewing

Phaps elegans

Numerous records. Obviously resident and apparently dispersed throughout area.

## Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus funereus

Common resident well dispersed throughout the area. Often heard rain-forest areas and seen in or passing over more open habitats. Largest flock recorded comprised 22 birds in Mar.

## Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Cacatua galerita

Present near Crotty on the Mt. Darwin foothills in Jun. and Nov. 1974.

## Green Rosella

Platycercus caledonicus

Common resident, present throughout the area in the vicinity of wet sclerophyll and rainforest habitats.

## Blue-winged Parrot

Neophema chrysostome

1 positively identified at the intersection of the Baxter Rivulet and the Kelly Basin Road in Mar. 1974.

Neophema parrots, species undetermined, also observed in Mar. 1974 (3 near Baxter River flying over an area of sedge and low scrub containing a number of dead eucalypts) and in Nov. 1974.

The very rare Orange-bellied Parrot Neophema chrysogaster has similar field characters to N. chrysostoma and could well occur in the area under investigation. The last recorded nesting of this species was at the south end of Macquarie Harbour from 1918 to 1923 (Hinsby 1947).

#### Ground Parrot

#### Pezoporus wallicus

Apparently resident and probably not uncommon. 4 flushed from sedge type habitat in the vicinity of the Kelly Basin Road just south of Crotty in Mar. 1974. Further records same area in Nov. 1974 and Mar. 1975. One flushed in swamp near King River just south of the Lyell Highway in Mar. 1974.

This elusive species is difficult to detect. Extensive areas of sedge type habitat appear suitable for the species. A more comprehensive census could be effected in the future by listening for the piping call, which is uttered for a period of approximately 30 minutes at dusk.

#### Fan-tailed Cuckoo

#### Cacomantis pyrrhophanus

3 Nov. records, 1 from 3 Km north of the Lyell Highway near the King River and 2 near Crotty.

#### Golden Bronze Cuckoo

#### Chrysococcyx plagusus

1 calling in wet sclerophyll approximately 8 km south of Lyell Highway and several in rainforest near start of Kelly Basin track in Nov. 1974.

#### Boobook Owl

#### Ninox novaeseelandiae

2 heard near Crotty in rainforest in Mar. 1974 and heard near Township Creek south of Crotty in Nov. This species is easily missed because of its nocturnal habits and is probably resident and not uncommon.

#### Spine-tailed Swift

#### Hirundapus caudacutus

Mar. 1974 records of 12, 30 km south of Lyell Highway and 3 low over rainforest at the meteorite crater.

#### Dollar-Bird

#### Eurystomus orientalis

1 shot by G. Hinsby near Crotty in 1918 is the only confirmed record of the species in Tasmania (Sharland 1958).

#### Welcome Swallow

#### Hirundo neoxena

A summer visitor, small numbers frequenting open lowland areas. Mar. and Nov. records at Lyell Highway bridge over King River and from the area immediately south of Crotty.

#### Tree-Martin

#### Petrochelidon nigricans

A summer visitor frequenting similar localities to the Welcome Swallow and tending to be more numerous than that species.

#### Australian Pipit

#### Anthus novaeseelandiae

Present picnic grounds at Lyell Highway bridge over King River in Mar. 1974.

## Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina novaehollandiae

4 records of up to 2 birds from the Lyell Highway bridge over the King River and the area up to 3 km north of the bridge.

## Australian Ground-Thrush

Zoothera dauma

Resident, mainly occurring in rainforest areas. Records throughout the year along the Kelly Basin Track.

## Blackbird

Turdus merula

Present Lyell Highway bridge over King River and area to the north. No evidence that it has spread to the rainforest areas to the south.

## Superb Blue Wren

Malurus cyaneus

Common resident. Observed all habitats except rainforest. Not present button grass areas unless other vegetation types present (i.e. low shrubs).

## Southern Emu-Wren

Stipiturus malachurus

Common resident in suitable habitat. Frequents swampy and button grass areas interspersed with low shrubs. Not recorded from pure stands of button grass. Recorded between 6 and 24 km south of Lyell Highway and from teatree swamp at Kelly Basin.

## Tasmanian Thornbill

Acanthiza ewingi

Common resident throughout the area in wet habitats where an abundance of trees or shrubs exist. Not present pure button grass plains and moorland. Nest found with eggs in Nov.

## Brown Thornbill

Acanthiza pusilla

The status of this species in the area requires further investigation. Visual separation of this species from A. ewingi is made usually on the basis of the absence of prominent fluffy white feather tufts on the side of the vent.

Juvenile A. ewingi individuals banded by Mr. K. Harris at a B. O. A. T. camp-out at the University Field Station at Koonya on the Tasman Peninsula in Dec. 1975 lacked this field character. Consequently, visual reports of A. pusilla in rainforest in late spring and summer may well concern juvenile A. ewingi. The two species may also be separated by differences in crown colouration, A. ewingi being much more rufous, and breast markings, A. pusilla being streaked whereas A. ewingi markings are more scalloped and have a greyer base. There are also vocal differences, but differentiation on this basis requires extreme familiarity with species, and may not be useful where juveniles are concerned.

Birds appearing to be A. pusilla were noted from the vicinity of the Lyell Highway bridge over the King River in Nov. and Mar. The area concerned was grazed, being open with scattered shrubs and wattles, habitat more consistent with the occurrence of A. pusilla than A. ewingi.

Several records were made of individuals without white vent feathers in rainforest areas approximately 30 km south of the Lyell Highway near the Nora River. These records may concern juvenile A. ewingi in view of recent evidence presented above. Further investigation is desirable, preferably by examination of the bird in the hand.

- Scrub-Tit Acanthornis magnus  
Resident in rainforest and wet sclerophyll habitats. Several records in area from 25 km south of Lyell Highway to Kelly Basin, particularly near the Bird River. Also observed at Fincham Creek.
- White-browed Scrub-Wren Sericornis frontalis  
The Tasmanian sub-species commonly known as the Brown Scrub-Wren is a common resident well distributed in rainforest, wet sclerophyll and dense shrubberies.
- Field-Wren Calamanthus fuliginosus  
Common resident well distributed in button grass and open areas interspersed with light scrub.
- Flame Robin Petroica phoenicea  
Rather uncommon. Records from vicinity of Lyell Highway bridge over King River in Mar. and Nov.; habitat modified by grazing. Pair seen near Crotty in open area with light scrub in Mar.
- Pink Robin Petroica rodinogaster  
Fairly common resident favouring locations near running water in rain-forest and wet sclerophyll habitats.
- Dusky Robin Petroica vittata  
Uncommon, probably resident. Observed near Crotty and on the Darwin Plateau at 600 m. Nest found containing eggs in Nov.
- Grey Fantail Rhipidura fuliginosa  
Common and well distributed throughout all timbered areas including rain-forest. Observed all seasons, but most authorities consider this species to migrate north partially during winter.
- Golden Whistler Pachycephala pectoralis  
Records from grazed country with wattles near King River 3 km north and immediately south of Lyell Highway, from rainforest area near Kelly Basin and the Nora River. Also noted at Crotty.  
The Golden Whistler has a preference for drier habitats than the Olive Whistler Pachycephala olivacea, and is listed as scarce in rainforest habitat (Ridpath and Moreau 1966).
- Olive Whistler Pachycephala olivacea  
Common resident of rainforest and dense wet habitats in the south of the study area. Also recorded approximately 3 km north of Lyell Highway.
- Grey Shrike-Thrush Colluricincla harmonica  
Common resident in all timbered areas including rainforest.
- Grey-breasted Silveryeye Zosterops lateralis  
Common with records from Lyell Highway bridge over King River, Crotty area, Purgatory Gap, and near the Nora River approximately 30 km south of Lyell Highway. Present in both rain forest and more open wet habitats where there are shrubs.

- Yellow-throated Honeyeater Meliphaga flavicollis  
Common resident, frequenting all timbered habitats including rainforest.
- Strong-billed Honeyeater Melithreptus validirostris  
Fairly common in rainforest and wet sclerophyll habitats. Only observed south of the Crotty area.
- Crescent Honeyeater Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera  
Very common resident, widely distributed throughout all timber and shrub covered wet habitats. Also noted in button grass-heath habitat at the tree line approximately 5 km from the Hydro-Electric Commission camp at the Franklin River.
- New Holland Honeyeater Phylidonyris novaehollandiae  
Apparently scarce, only recorded on the Darwin Plateau at 600 m altitude in Mar. 1975.
- Eastern Spinebill Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris  
Abundant at times, only one record, approximately 28 km south of Lyell Highway in rainforest, until Oct. 1975, when common in most arboreal and scrub habitats including near Crotty, Travellers Creek, Fincham Creek and rainforest on Kelly Basin Track.
- Beautiful Firetail Emblema bella  
Fairly common and widely distributed in scrub habitats. Present in tea-tree swamp at Kelly Basin and in sedge/scrub areas around Crotty.
- House Sparrow Passer domesticus  
Only recorded near human habitation at the Lyell Highway bridge over the King River.
- Goldfinch Carduelis carduelis  
Recorded at the Lyell Highway bridge over the King River and a flock of c. 25 was seen approximately 12 km from the Hydro-Electric Commission camp at the Franklin River in Jun.
- Black Currawong Strepera fuliginosa  
Common and widespread resident noted from both rainforest and more open habitats in all areas south of Lyell Hwy.
- Forest Raven Corvus tasmanicus  
Resident, distributed throughout the area and observed in or over most habitat types.

#### DISCUSSION :

The Crotty area is the most southerly area in the west of the State to which there is direct road access for conventional vehicles. Hence, a survey of its avifauna may be used as an indicator for less accessible areas in the south.

Fifty-three species of birds have been recorded from the area under investigation, including 3 introduced species. One species recorded is an accidental vagrant to the State.

Ridpath and Moreau (1966) consider that Tasmania has 92 common species (excluding sea birds). Hence, the area under investigation has an impoverished avifauna, which is typical of wet habitat (Brereton and Kikkawa, 1963) as is prevalent in the west of the State. Dry sclerophyll, the Tasmanian habitat supporting the greatest number of species, is not represented in the study area.

Three species present in the area, Ground Parrot, Southern Emu-Wren and Scrub-Tit are often considered rare and to have a restricted distribution. It is suggested that this view is incorrect, all of these species being widely distributed in the State, particularly in the south and west (Newman, 1975). The apparent scarcity of these species arises from their secretive habitats, lack of obvious vocalization and occupation of habitat in areas which are seldom visited because of difficulties of access.

The status of one species in the South-West of Tasmania, the Orange-bellied Parrot, is a cause for considerable concern. This species is listed in the Red Book (Fisher et al 1969) as endangered with extinction. It is thought to breed in the South-West of Tasmania (Milledge, 1972), migrating to the mainland in winter. However, its present status, breeding habitat requirements, etc. are unknown. Urgent investigation is required such that areas can be reserved to ensure its survival.

The present study indicated that Neophema parrots occur in the Crotty area, but only the Blue-winged Parrot was positively identified. This species typically is found in savannah woodland and cultivated areas, and thus has a predominantly eastern distribution in Tasmania. Indeed, 1973/74 records were the first indication that the Blue-winged Parrot occurs on the West Coast south of the Arthur River (also noted at the mouth of the Henty River north of Strahan, Mar. 1974.) If recent West Coast records represent a presently occurring extensions of the Blue-winged Parrot's range, then agricultural modification of the environment may be assisting this process. For instance, grazing activities south of the Lyell Highway bridge over the King River have created a pseudo-savannah woodland type habitat. Consequently, the occurrence of Blue-winged Parrots in the Crotty area could be a recent development and the species could be in direct competition with the Orange-bellied Parrot in the area.

As previously discussed the observation of the Brown Thornbill in rainforest requires further investigation. Confusion concerning the identification and/or geographical distribution of the Tasmanian and Brown Thornbills exists throughout the range of the Tasmanian Thornbill. Recent remarks concern the possible occurrence of the Tasmanian Thornbill on Wilsons Promontory in Victoria (Cooper 1975).

Raptors, species whose presence is obvious, and identification difficult, were scarce in the area, only the Brown Hawk and Wedge-tailed Eagle being recorded more than once. The scarcity of the Swamp Harrier, a species so typical of swampy open areas in the east of the State must reflect the absence of suitable prey in the west (e.g. young of the Tasmanian Native Hen Tribonyx mortierii, Spur-winged Plover Vanellus miles and rabbits). Two other raptors, the Grey Goshawk Accipiter novaehollandiae and the White-breasted Sea Eagle Haliaeetus leucogaster were observed over the lower reaches of the Gordon River in Nov. 1974 and would be expected to occur in the Kelly Basin area on occasions. No Peregrine Falcons Falco peregrinus were observed during the survey although apparently suitable crags for breeding are available in the study area. The Peregrine Falcon has been reported for the adjacent Frenchman's Cap area (Pinner 1976)



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## BIRDS OF NORTHERN SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA

David Ziegeler

## INTRODUCTION

The following list of birds was compiled on a bushwalking trip of two weeks duration, from 24 February to 11 March 1975, through the area. The route of the walk was from the Lyell Highway, down the Jane River Track, south-east to the northern end of the Prince of Wales range, over the range and into the Denison River Valley, up to the Spires, east to the Denison Range, south to Stepped Hills, into the Vale of Rasselas and out to the Gordon River Road.

The vegetation types travelled through are as follows: temperate rain forest, scrub rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest between the Lyell Highway and the Prince of Wales Range except for a strip of temperate rainforest along the Denison River and in the southern end of the Vale of Rasselas. Wet scrub and wet mallee patches were scattered throughout the area from the Denison River Valley to the Gordon River Road. Shrub moor and wet hummock sedgeland (button grass plains and moors) were the dominant vegetation formations that were walked through between the Spires and the Gordon River Road. Montane moors, dwarf shrubbery, dwarf rainforest on the Prince of Wales Range, the Spires and Denison Range and a patch of sub-alpine woodland at Lake Rhona in the Denison Range. Highland lakes and tarns provided an additional habitat in the Spires area and Denison Range.

## LIST OF SPECIES

Little Pied Cormorant Phalacrocorax melanoleucos one seen on Windy Lake near the Spires and at a tarn 3 km to the south-east. Possibly the same bird 5 March and 8 March.

Wedge-tailed Eagle Aquila audax a pair seen in the Prince of Wales Range and one at Mt. Curly near the Spires, 1 March and 6 March.

Brown Falcon Falco berigora a pair seen in the Denison Range, 10 March. Another hawk was seen in the Denison Valley but was not identified because of the distance of the observation.

Bronzewing Pigeon Phaps sp. 2 flushed from the Jane River Track, not identified for certain but probably elegans because of the habitat and area.

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus funereus scattered in small numbers throughout the area, two large flocks of about 30 each seen in the Spires area.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo Cacatua galerita heard in scrub rain forest between Jane River Track and the Prince of Wales Range and one seen in the Denison River Valley.

Green Rosella Platycercus caledonicus small flocks throughout the area.

Ground Parrot Pezoporus wallicus 3 heard at dusk on 2 March, on high button grass hills north of the Spires. One seen east of Mt. Curly on 8 March, one in the Vale of Rasselas 11 March, and one under Stepped Hills on 11 March.

Boobook Owl Ninox novaeseelandiae one heard in temperate rainforest by the Denison River on the night of 1 March.

Spine-tailed Swift Hirundapus caudacutus flocks seen flying over button grass plains along the Jane River Track on 24 and 25 February. A flock of about 25 seen on the Prince of Wales Range on 1 March. A few seen above buttongrass in the Denison River Valley on 2 March. Two seen on the Denison Range on 10 March.

Tree Martin Petrochelidon nigricans, two seen on the Prince of Wales Range on 1 March.

Australian Pipit Anthus novaeseelandiae, three seen on the Denison Range at an altitude of 1,100 metres.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae heard in burnt wet sclerophyll forest along the Jane River Track.

Australian Ground-Thrush Zoothera dauma, two seen in temperate rainforest by the Denison River.

Superb Blue Wren Malurus cyaneus a party seen in open tea-tree scrub in the southern end of the Vale of Rasselas.

Southern Emu-Wren Stipiturus malachurus, scattered sporadically throughout the areas of buttongrass.

Tasmanian Thornbill Acanthiza ewingi recorded in all vegetation types throughout the area except for montane moor, shrub moor and wet hummock sedge-land.

Brown Scrub-Wren Sericornis humilis distribution as for the Tasmanian Thornbill.

Field-Wren Calamanthus fuliginosus common in shrub moor, wet hummock sedge-land from the Denison River Valley to Gordon River Road ranging up to 1,100 metres on the Denison Range.

Scrub Tit Acanthornis magnus seen in scrub rainforest and wet scrub on the western slopes of the Prince of Wales Range.

Flame Robin Petroica phoenicea heard calling at Windy Lake.

Pink Robin Petroica rodinogaster seen at Best's Rivulet on the Jane River Track, in scrub rainforest at the base of the Prince of Wales Range, a brown plumaged bird in wet scrub at Lake Curly. Heard in wet scrub in the Vale of Rasselas.

Grey Fantail Rhipidura fuliginosa seen along the Jane River Track and at the Florentine River at the southern end of the Vale of Rasselas.

Golden Whistler Pachycephala pectoralis seen at Best's Rivulet on the Jane River Track, heard in scrub rainforest near the base of the western side of the Prince of Wales Range and in wet scrub in the Denison River Valley.

Olive Whistler Pachycephala olivacea heard along the Jane River Track, western slopes of the Prince of Wales Range and at Lake Curly.

Grey Shrike-Thrush Colluricincla harmonica heard along the Jane River Track, at Lake Curly, seen in wet mallee east of Mt. Curly and in wet sclerophyll in Vale of Rasselas.

Spotted Pardalote Pardalotus punctatus heard in wet sclerophyll forest in the Vale of Rasselas.

Yellow-tipped Pardalote Pardalotus striatus, distribution as for the previous species.

Grey-breasted Silveryeye Zosterops lateralis recorded along the Jane River Track to the Prince of Wales Range, in the Denison Range and in the Vale of Rasselas.

Yellow-throated Honeyeater Meliphaga flavicollis seen east of Mt. Curly, heard on Stepped Hills and common in timbered areas in the Vale of Rasselas.

Strong-billed Honeyeater Melithreptus validirostris heard on the Jane River Track.

Crescent Honeyeater Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera common throughout the area.

New Holland Honeyeater Phylidonyris novaehollandiae moderately common on the plains 2 km east of Mt. Curly.

Eastern Spinebill Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris heard at Best's Rivulet, in scrub rainforest on the western side of the Prince of Wales Range and in the Vale of Rasselas.

Yellow Wattlebird Anthochaera paradoxa heard in wet sclerophyll forest in the Vale of Rasselas and in a patch of wet sclerophyll on Stepped Hills.

Beautiful Firetail Emblema bella heard by a scrub-choked creek north of the Spires and in sub-alpine woodland at Lake Rhona in the Denison Range.

Black Currawong Strepera fuliginosa recorded in small numbers throughout the area.

Forest Raven Corvus tasmanicus, 3 seen at the Florentine River.

#### CONCLUSION :

This area is uninhabited and parts of it little visited even by bushwalkers and would be virtually unstudied ornithologically.

This list would of course not be fully comprehensive of the bird fauna of the area because of the large area covered in a short period of time but provides a basis for further study in the area and may fill gaps in the knowledge of the distribution of some species.

## BIRDS OF THE FAR WEST COAST OF TASMANIA

Peter Fielding

## INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the area from Renison Bell to the Pieman River. Most observations were made from the road which travels via Rosebery, Tullah, Guildford, Waratah and Corinna. The main habitats are temperate rainforest, pineforest, wet sclerophyll forest, wet mallee, wet scrub, sedgeland, paddocks, beaches and ocean.

The far west coast is a mountainous region, the major peaks being Mt. Murchison 1,275 m, Mt. Farrel 712 m, Mt. Pearse 1,001 m, Mt. Cleveland 857 m and Mt. Donaldson 435 m. There are numerous rivers and creeks. The major river is the Pieman which, unfortunately, is polluted by mining companies at Rosebery and Renison Bell. The Savage River is also polluted from mining activities. These rivers lack the birdlife found on the nearby unpolluted Donaldson River.

Mr. J. Stockley and Mr. D. G. Thomas kindly supplied me with lists of birds seen between Renison Bell and Waratah during 1974 and 1975. Their observations together with my own made during a five day visit in early-March 1975 form the basis of this paper. Others who assisted with their observations were the Pieman River Ferry Captain, hunters, fishermen and Mr. D. Murray a geologist working in the area.

## ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES

Black Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo

Seen at the junction of the Huskisson and Pieman Rivers near Rosebery and along the Pieman near its mouth.

Black-faced Cormorant P. fuscescens

Present near the mouth of the Pieman River.

Hoary-headed Grebe Podiceps poliocephalus

Single birds at Waratah and on the Pieman River near Corinna. Large numbers of this species irrupted into Tasmania in early 1975. Not normally present on the lower Pieman River.

White-faced Heron Ardea novaehollandiae

Common from Corinna to the mouth of the Pieman River.

Black Swan Cygnus atratus

A small flock of resident birds frequent the Pieman River near its mouth.

Black Duck Anas superciliosa

Recorded at Waratah.

Grey Teal A. gibberifrons

Recorded at Waratah.

Grey Goshawk Accipiter novaehollandiae

Irregular visitor to Corinna and heard in rainforest between Rosebery and Tullah.

- Wedge-tailed Eagle Aquila audax  
Occasionally seen between Savage River and Corinna. Two birds seen in rainforest near Renison Bell.
- White-breasted Sea Eagle Haliaeetus leucogaster  
Fairly common Pieman Head. Reported to have nested on Conical Rock during the last two years.
- Swamp Harrier Circus approximans  
Recorded once at Waratch.
- Tasmanian Native Hen Tribonyx mortierii  
Present in the Guildford district on the Hellyer and Fossey Rivers. Reported to be common at the Pieman River mouth where numbers have increased over the past few years.
- Spur-winged Plover Vanellus miles  
Common at Waratah and surrounding pastures. Present around Rosebery in small numbers.
- Pacific Gull Larus pacificus  
Three birds at the mouth of the Pieman River.
- Silver Gull L. novaehollandiae  
Common at the Pieman River mouth.
- Caspian Tern Hydroprogne caspia  
One seen at the mouth of the Pieman River.
- Brush Bronzewing Phaps elegans  
Widespread. Recorded near Renison Bell, Tullah, Waratah and Corinna.
- Swift Parrot Lathamus discolor  
Several small flocks between Renison Bell and the Hatfield River in Mar. 1975.
- Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus funereus  
Common and widespread in all habitats with trees and occasionally seen flying over sedgeland.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo Cacatua galerita  
Less common than the previous species, occurring in much the same habitats.
- Green Rosella Platycercus caledonicus  
Common and widespread occurring in most habitats with trees including pineforest and in paddocks.
- Ground Parrot Pezoporus wallicus  
Fairly common around Hardwicke Bay at the mouth of the Pieman River.
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo Cacomantis pyrrhophanus  
Seen near Bulgobac River and at Rosebery.
- Golden Bronze Cuckoo Chrysococcyx plagusus  
Heard in wet mallee at Bulgobac River and in rainforest near Renison Bell.

- Boobook Owl                    Ninox novaeseelandiae  
Present near Rosebery.
- Spine-tailed Swift            Hirundapus caudacutus  
Observed above the Pieman River near Rosebery.
- Azure Kingfisher              Alcyone azurea  
Reported along the Donaldson River but was not seen in the polluted Savage and Pieman Rivers.
- Laughing Kookaburra        Dacelo gigas  
Calling in wet sclerophyll forest near Guildford and in lighter forest near the Fossey River.
- Welcome Swallow              Hirundo neoxena  
Common townships, sedgelands and along highways through forest.
- Tree-Martin                    Petrochelidon nigricans  
Seen near Tullah and at Guildford.
- Australian Pipit               Anthus novaeseelandiae  
Fairly common in sedgeland and grassy areas.
- Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike    Coracina novaehollandiae  
Recorded at Waratah, Fossey and Bulgobac Rivers.
- Australian Ground Thrush    Zoothera dauma  
Common in rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest.
- Blackbird                      Turdus merula  
Present at Waratah and Rosebery.
- Superb Blue Wren              Malurus cyaneus  
Common and widespread in most habitats from rainforest margins to sedge-lands.
- Southern Emu-Wren            Stipiturus malachurus  
Recorded in sedgeland at Chinamans Creek, near the Pieman River mouth and at Bulgobac River.
- Tasmanian Thornbill            Acanthiza ewingi  
Common in a variety of tree based habitats including pineforest.
- Scrub-Tit                      Acanthornis magnus  
Common in wet sclerophyll forest, stands of tea tree and rainforest. Adult feeding independent young at Corinna 7 Mar. 1975.
- Brown Scrub-Wren             Sericornis humilis  
Common in rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest and pineforest.
- Field-Wren                     Calamanthus fuliginosus  
Common in sedgeland, wet mallee and wet scrub.
- Flame Robin                    Petroica phoenicea  
Common near the highest point on the Murchison Highway 690 m above sea level between Tullah and the Huskisson River.

- Pink Robin P. rodinogaster  
Widespread and common in rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest.
- Dusky Robin P. vittata  
Common in areas of light forest, wet mallee, rainforest - eucalypt mixtures, pineforest, sedgeland and in townships.
- Grey Fantail Rhipidura fuliginosa  
Common in rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest, light forest and stands of tea tree.
- Golden Whistler Pachycephala pectoralis  
Common in wet sclerophyll forest, light forest and pineforest.
- Olive Whistler P. olivacea  
Common in wet sclerophyll forest. Female feeding dependent young near Rosebery 6 Mar.
- Grey Shrike-Thrush Colluricincla harmonica  
Common. Wet sclerophyll forest is the preferred habitat but also occurs in pineforest.
- Yellow-tipped Pardalote Pardalotus striatus  
Common between Fossey and Bulgobac Rivers but not recorded further south 21 - 24 Oct. 1975. The only other record for the area is of a bird calling at Rosebery on 12 Aug. 1974.
- Grey-breasted Silvereye Zosterops lateralis  
Common in wet sclerophyll forest and rainforest.
- Yellow-throated Honeyeater Meliphaga flavicollis  
Common in a variety of tree based habitats from wet sclerophyll to light eucalypt forest and wet mallee. Occasional in rainforest.
- Strong-billed Honeyeater Melithreptus validirostris  
Recorded at the Fossey River and Corinna in wet sclerophyll forest. Two birds feeding on the nectar of a flowering tree deep in rainforest.
- Crescent Honeyeater Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera  
Common and widespread in a variety of habitats ranging from rainforest to sedgeland with scattered bushes.
- New Holland Honeyeater P. novaehollandiae  
One seen in a tall stand of tea tree at Corinna.
- Eastern Spinebill Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris  
Widespread and common particularly in rainforest 21 - 24 Oct. 1975. Scarce at other times.
- Yellow Wattlebird Anthochaera paradoxa  
Recorded in scattered tall eucalypts near Guildford and the Fossey River.

- Beautiful Firetail      Emblema bella  
Recorded at Bulgobac River and Chinamans Creek. A fisherman has noticed a sharp decline in numbers at the Pieman River mouth over the last 10 years.
- House Sparrow      Passer domesticus  
Common at Guildford, Waratah, Rosebery and Tullah.
- Goldfinch      Carduelis carduelis  
Common at Waratah and seen deep in a pine forest near Guildford.
- Starling      Sturnus vulgaris  
Common at Waratah and Rosebery.
- Black Currawong      Strepera fuliginosa  
Common in a variety of habitats. Recorded on a beach at Hardwicke Bay and a single bird perched in a pineforest near Guildford.
- Forest Raven      Corvus tasmanicus  
Common in a variety of habitats ranging from rainforest to sedgeland. Often feeds on road kills.

## BIRDS OF FRENCHMAN'S CAP NATIONAL PARK

## D. Pinner

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Hoary-headed Grebe           | <u>Podiceps poliocephalus</u>     |
| 2. Wedge-tailed Eagle           | <u>Aquila audax</u>               |
| 3. Peregrine Falcon             | <u>Falco peregrinus</u>           |
| 4. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo | <u>Calyptrorhynchus funereus</u>  |
| 5. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo     | <u>Cacatua galerita</u>           |
| 6. Green Rosella                | <u>Platycercus caledonicus</u>    |
| 7. Australian Ground Thrush     | <u>Zoothera dauma</u>             |
| 8. Southern Emu-Wren            | <u>Stipiturus malachurus</u>      |
| 9. Tasmanian Thornbill          | <u>Acanthiza ewingi</u>           |
| 10. Scrub-Tit                   | <u>Acanthornis magnus</u>         |
| 11. Brown Scrub-Wren            | <u>Sericornis humilis</u>         |
| 12. Field-Wren                  | <u>Calamanthus fuliginosus</u>    |
| 13. Scarlet Robin               | <u>Petroica multicolor</u>        |
| 14. Pink Robin                  | <u>P. rodinogaster</u>            |
| 15. Grey Fantail                | <u>Rhipidura fuliginosa</u>       |
| 16. Golden Whistler             | <u>Pachycephala pectoralis</u>    |
| 17. Olive Whistler              | <u>P. olivacea</u>                |
| 18. Grey Shrike-Thrush          | <u>Colluricincla harmonica</u>    |
| 19. Grey-breasted Silveryeye    | <u>Zosterops lateralis</u>        |
| 20. Yellow-throated Honeyeater  | <u>Meliphaga flavicollis</u>      |
| 21. Strong-billed Honeyeater    | <u>Melithreptus validirostris</u> |
| 22. Crescent Honeyeater         | <u>Phylidonyris pyrroptera</u>    |
| 23. Black Currawong             | <u>Strepera fuliginosa</u>        |
| 24. Forest Raven                | <u>Corvus tasmanicus</u>          |