

BIRDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM AND THE WAITE CONSERVATION RESERVE PART 2

by Max Possingham

Part 1 of this article discussed the bird species commonly recorded in the Waite Arboretum (WA) and the Waite Conservation Reserve (WCR). This part discusses the uncommon species that will be of interest to the more dedicated birdwatcher who is prepared to spend more time on regular visits in all seasons.

Water and wetland species

Eight wetland species have been recorded in the WA. Some are quite unusual in that J Saunders (1983, 1985) reports that over 1972 to 1981, the following were recorded once or twice: Australian Grebe, Great Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pacific Heron, Great Egret, Australian White Ibis, Grey Teal and Eurasian Coot. The grebe and the cormorants will only be found in deep water, the grebe foraging for water insects and the cormorants for fish, molluscs and crustaceans. The heron and egret forage in shallow water or sometimes in damp grassland, for frogs, lizards and aquatic invertebrates. The Coot requires deep water for foraging on vegetation and reeds for refuge and nesting, but can be seen on grassland, often utilising food scraps.

Two additional species have been observed in recent years on or near the WA dam; they are small numbers of Cape Barren Goose in early 1995 to early 1996 and one Australian Pelican in August 1994 and 1996. While strictly not a wetland species, the Cape Barren Goose is never far from fresh or brackish water feeding on introduced grasses and legumes, much to the annoyance of graziers. The Pelican feeds on large quantities of fish and would not be satisfied by the dam for very long.

There is one old record of a Buff-banded Rail breeding in the WA.

Birds of prey

By their very nature, birds of prey are unlikely to be numerous in the WA and the WCR, however most of the local raptors will be recorded if one stands looking at the sky for long enough. J Saunders (1983, 1985) reports that the following have been recorded in the WA once or twice: Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Australian Hobby, Australian Kestrel, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Southern Boobook and Tawny Frogmouth, the latter breeding in the WA in 1989 and 1992. Most of the diurnal birds of prey will be 'overhead transients' rather than 'overhead foragers' and so cannot be recorded as utilising the habitat.

The owl and frogmouth are nocturnal birds of prey, the owl mainly feeding on insects but may take small birds and mammals. The frogmouth feeds on a variety of invertebrates, mainly scorpions, spiders and centipedes with some frogs and small mammals. The owl is quite common in the Adelaide suburbs and is often heard repeatedly calling 'more-pork' or 'boo-book' on spring and summer nights. The frogmouth is less common but does live in the suburbs.

Aerial feeders

In addition to the resident Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin are occasionally recorded feeding on insects well above the tree canopy in the WA and the WCR.

Ground Feeders

The less common ground feeders in the WA are t

Some of these honeyeaters may drift down into the WA, to reward the diligent bird-watcher.

Leaf and/or bark gleaners

The less common species in this community are the Rufous Whistler, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Varied Sittella, Spotted Pardalote and Silvereye.

Two of these species were recorded in the WA by J Saunders (1983, 1985), viz the Rufous Whistler, once in 1972 and 3 or 4 Silvereye in June to December. The others, as well as these two, have been recorded in the WCR.

The cuckoos are members of this community and the Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, both being nomadic, will occasionally be recorded during in spring and summer in the WCR. Both species have diagnostic calls, parasitise fairy-wrens, thornbills and flycatchers and feed on insects and caterpillars, including the hairy variety.

Generalists

The Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, also readily identified by its characteristic call, like the cuckoos, is a caterpillar-eater, but also feeds on insects, beetles, seeds and vegetable matter. This species is occasionally seen around Adelaide and J Saunders (1982) reports this species present in the WA in July 1976 and 1981; it is more common in the WCR.

Specialists

The Mistletoebird, because of its wide ranging nomadic habit, searching for flowering mistletoe, is occasionally recorded in the Adelaide suburbs, the WA and the WCR. While the main food is mistletoe berries, other foods are used, such as insects and the fruit of other plants including privet, hawthorn, cotoneaster and saltbush.

It assists the distribution of mistletoe by turning sideways to deposit the sticky seed on its perch. I have seen a dead acacia bush literally festooned with dead mistletoe seeds from an adjacent live acacia liberally infested with mistletoe in spring and