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## 70 Birds of Tasman Peninsula

**Peter MacFie**

Field notes by an 1880's Bird-observer.

During the mid-1880s a Scottish-born antiquarian and naturalist, James Roxburgh McClymont M.A., lived at Koonya. Educated at the University of Edinburgh, the exact time of McClymont's arrival in Tasmania is uncertain. Walch's Almanac refers to him living at *New Walden* – the name probably taken from *Walden Pond*, the home of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Naturalist, mystic and philosopher, Henry Thoreau (1817-62). Thoreau had "escaped" from city life of New England, U.S.A., and lived alone in primitive self-sufficiency. An "ardent lover of nature", he wrote of his experiences in "Walden, Of Life in the Woods", in 1854, in which wildlife were carefully described. However, he only became known following his premature death.

McClymont appears to have owned the Cascades prison station at Koonya, as well as land on Shelly Beach. He donated the land on which St. Alban's Church was erected. McClymont's "First List of the Birds of Tasman's Peninsula" was published in the papers of the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1887. He appears to have left Tasmania in the early 1900s.

McClymont's list was compiled, as he says, "within one mile radius of Koonya", by "an interested observer of the manners and customs of birds". In some cases, the scientific (and popular) names of the birds listed have changed.

McClymont was the first, but not the last, to settle at Koonya with idealistic ambitions – like Henry Thoreau, aiming to escape a materialistic society.

### **A First List of the Birds of Tasman's Peninsula**

**By J.R. McClymont, M.A.**

The subjoined list is not the work of a scientific ornithologist, but of one who has spent a good many hours in ambush, an interested observer of the manners and customs of birds. There are few of those included in the list which are not of common occurrence in the district above designated; these have been collated with specimens in the Museum, or with Gould's descriptions and plates. The field of observation is within a radius of a mile from the settlement at Koonya, unless otherwise stated in a note. The classification is adopted from "A Systematic List of Tasmanian Birds" by Col. W.V. Legge, R.A., F.L.S.

## Accipitres

1. *Astur novae hollandiae*, *Gwelin*. White Goshawk. Two or three seen within the last four years.
2. *Uroaetus audax*, *Latham*. Wedge-tailed Eagle.
3. *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, *Gmelin*. Grey-backed Sea Eagle. One seen on the Eastern Coast near Tasman's Arch
4. *Hieracidea orientalis*, *Schlegel*. Brown Hawk
5. *Ninox boobook*, *Latham*. Brown Hawk Owl. (Ewing in Tas. Jour, i.53).
6. *Ninox maculata*, *Vig.* and *Horsf.* Spotted Hawk Owl. Often heard. One was caught in the kitchen of a house, having flown in.

## Psittaci

7. *Calyptorhynchus xanthonotus*, *Gould*. Black Cockatoo. Said by the country people to presage rain.
8. *Platycercus flaviventris*, *Temminck*. Yellow-bellied parakeet.
9. *Pezoporus formosus*, *Latham*. Ground Parrakeet.
10. *Lathamus discolor*, *Shaw*. Swift Lorikeet.

## Picariae

11. *Cuculus pallidus*, *Latham*. Pallid Cuckoo.
12. *Cuculus flabelliformis*, *Latham*. Fantailed Cuckoo.
13. *Podargus cuvieri*, *Vig.* and *Horsf.* More Pork. About the old buildings, from which it is difficult to dislodge them, even with sticks and stones.

## Passeres

14. *Corone australis*, *Gould*. White-eyed crow.
15. *Strepera fuliginosa*, *Gould*. Black Magpie. Seen rarely
16. *Strepera argute*, *Gould*. Hill Magpie. As many as twenty together occasionally.
17. *Grauculus parvirostris*, *Gould*. Summer Bird. Arrives in the latter part of October,
18. *Collyriocincla rectirostris*, *Jard and Selvy*. Whistling Shrike Thrush. Known as "Whistling Dick", or locally anthropomorphically, "Black-eyed Susan". Man's nearness to the animal is rudely indicated in these friendly and familiar appellations.
19. *Gymnorhina hyperleuca*, *Gould*. Magpie. First domiciled at Saltwater River, this bird has reached Impression Bay. The Sparrow has advanced in the same direction.
20. *Cracticus cinereus*, *Gould*. Butcher Bird. Its piping note is heard from time to time.
21. *Pachycephala olivacea*, *Vig.* and *Horsf.* Olivaceous Thickhead.
22. *Pachycephala glaucura*, *Gould*. Grey-tailed Thickhead. This bird, or *P. gutturalis*, was observed once in the gully behind Koonya.
23. *Rhipidura saturata*, *Sharpe*. Fantail. Called by boys "Cranky Fan" from its erratic movements in pursuit of insects.
24. *Myiagra nitida*. *Gould*. Shining Flycatcher. Seen once near Taranna.
25. *Petraea leggii*, *Sharpe*. Scarlet-breasted robin.
26. *Petraea phoenicea*, *Gould*. Flame-breasted Robin. The female has the under-surface grey. See Gould i. 283
27. *Petraea rhodiogaster*. *Drapier*. Pink-breasted Robin.
28. *Petraea vittata*, *Quoy et Gaimard*. Dusky Robin.

29. *Malurus gouldi*, *Sharpe*. Blue Wren. The males through the winter in blue plumage are seen. See *Gould* i. 321.
30. *Geocichla macrorhyncha*, *Gould*. Ground thrush.
31. *Cinclosoma punctatum*, *Lath*. Ground bird.
32. *Calamanthus fuliginosus*, *Vig.* and *Horsf.*, Rush Warbler.
33. *Stipiturus malachurus*, *Shaw*. Emu Wren. Seen many years ago at Eaglehawk Neck; lately, near Roaring Beach.
34. *Sericornis humilis*, *Gould*. Sombre Bush Tit.
35. *Acanthiza diemenensis*, *Gould*. Brown Tail.
36. *Acanthorhynchus tenniostriis*, *Lath*. Spine Bill. Very easily beguiled by an imitation of its whistling notes.
37. *Melithreptus validirostris*, *Gould*. Strong-billed Honey-eater.
38. *Melithreptus melanocephalus*, *Gould*. Black-headed Honey-eater.
39. *Ptilotis flavigula*, *Gould*. Yellow-throated Honey-eater. The spring note of this bird is almost as characteristic of the season as the note of the Summer-bird.
40. *Meliornis novae hollandiae*, *Lath*, New Holland Honey-eater.
41. *Meliornis australasiana*, *Shaw*. Tasmanian Honey-eater. The peculiar humming and clicking noise made by this bird is, I suppose, produced by the wings and mandibles.
42. *Acanthochaera inauris*, *Gould*. Wattle Bird
43. *Acanthochaera mellivora*. *Lath*. Brush Wattle Bird.
44. *Zosterops caeruleus*, *Lath*. White Eye.
45. *Pardalotus punctatus*, *Shaw and Nodder*. Diamond Bird.
46. *Pardalotus affinis*, *Gould*. Allied Diamond Bird.
47. *Hirundo neoxena*, *Gould*. Australian Swallow.
48. *Estrela bella*, *Lath*. Fire-tailed Finch
49. *Anthus australis*, *Vig.* and *Horsf.* Australian Pipit.

## Columbae

50. *Phaps chalcoptera*, *Latham*. Bronze-wing

## Gallinae

A Quail, but species not determined.

## Fulicarlae

51. *Tribonyx gouldii*, *Selater*. Native Hen. One shot near Koonya.

## Grallae

52. *Aegialites monacha*, *Geoffrey*. Hooded Sand Plover
53. *Aegialites ruficapilla*, *Temm*. Red-capped Sand Plover. Both found on the beach at Pirates Bay.
54. *Lobivanellus lobatus*, *Latham*. Wattled Plover. A bird answering to this shot near Safety Cove.
55. *Haematopus longirostris*, *Vieill*. White-breasted Oyster Catcher.
56. *Haematopus unicolor*, *Wagler*. Sooty Oyster Catcher.

## Gaviae

57. *Sterna caspia*, *Pallas*. Caspian Tern. Shot near Taranna.
58. *Sterna poliocerca*, *Gould*. Bass's Straits Tern
59. *Larus pacificus*, *Latham*. Pacific Gull
60. *Larus novae hollandiae*, *Stephens*. Little Gull.

## Steganopodes

61. *Sula serratator*, *Banks*. Australian Gannet. This bird enters the water sidewise, and penetrating it first with one outstretched wing raises a small fountain of foam.
62. *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *Linu*. Common Cormorant.
63. *Phalacrocorax leucogaster*, *Gould*. White-breasted Cormorant.

## Anseres

64. *Cygnus atratus*, *Lath*. Black Swan. Seen near Price's Flats. Also on lagoon near Lime Bay, where the nest has been found.
65. *Anas superciliosa*, *Gmelin*. Wild Duck. On the lagoons.
66. *Anas castanea*, *Egton*. Teal. Shot near Koonya
67. *Biziura lobata*, *Shaw*. Musk Duck. Shot at Impression Bay.

## Herodiones.

68. *Ardea novae hollandiae*, *Lath*. White-fronted Heron. Sometimes seen frequenting cultivated paddocks in winter.
69. *Botaurus poicilopterus*, *Wagler*. Australian Bittern. Found on the N.W. side.

## Impennes.

70. *Eudyptula minor*, *Forster*. Little Penguin.

The following species probably belong to the district, but not with sufficient certainty to be placed in the above list:- *Strix castanops*, *Cuculus plagosus*, *Phaps elegans*, *Pophyrrio cyanocephalus*, *Gallinago australis*

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