

A SPANGLED DRONGO ON KANGAROO ISLAND

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INTRODUCTION

The Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* is a common, migratory species in northern and eastern Australia, moving south in September-October and returning north in April-May. South of north-eastern New South Wales it is less common, being rare between Sydney and far eastern Victoria (Pizzey 1984). The only South Australian record is that of one bird, seven kilometres NNE of Koolunga on 13 May 1974 (Pedler 1974). This note documents the second South Australian record.

THE RECORD

At about 1600 on 11 June 1988, while walking on the western outskirts of Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, I noticed a black bird foraging in tall

mallee woodland with an open, grassy understorey. The bird was larger than a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and smaller than a Little Raven *Corvus mellori*. It sometimes glided several metres from a low perch to secure an insect on the ground and then returned to another perch. I viewed the bird through 7 x 50 binoculars when it was perched about 15 metres from me and I eventually approached to within one metre of the bird. During one hour's observations, the following additional features, based on my field notes, were recorded:

Large head and a heavy, slightly downcurved, black bill. A few short rictal bristles. Body dull black, back of head and nape with a sooty appearance contrasting with the glossy wings. Crown and breast uniformly black, lacking glossy green markings. Undertail-coverts distally edged creamy white giving a scalloped appearance. Tail less glossy, deeply forked and flared outwards laterally towards the tips. Iris light tan. Legs and feet black.



Plate 1. Spangled Drongo photographed in a domestic garden in Kingscote, 12 June 1988. Photo: L. Bebbington.

I therefore identified the bird as a Spangled Drongo, the light tan instead of red iris, the lack of 'spangles' and the scalloped undertail-coverts indicating that the bird was immature.

On several occasions, the bird was ineffectually harassed by Red Wattlebirds *Anthochaera carunculata* and once by an Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*. I did not hear it call and did not see it again in this area in the next two weeks. The trees in the area were *Eucalyptus diversifolia*, *E. cneorifolia*, *E. rugosa* and *E. landsdowneana*. There were a few scattered shrubs of *Leucopogon rufus* and *Lasiopetalum behrii*.

Mr L. Bebbington of Brownlow (two kilometres south of Kingscote) informed me that presumably the same bird as described above was present in his home garden on 12 June 1988, the day after my sighting. It allowed close approach and Mr Bebbington took several excellent photographs including Plate 1. He noted that the bird spent much time foraging from *Callistemon* flowers (for insects), taking insects from the lawn and from the air and it readily ate mealworms thrown onto the driveway. It sometimes rested on concrete for over five minutes and occasionally emitted a disyllabic grating call like that of a Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta* but of shorter duration.

A desiccated specimen of a Spangled Drongo was handed in to the Kingscote office of the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service on 31 August 1988. It had been found by Mr R. Clare whose cat had mortally injured it in late June-early July 1988. He had cared for the bird for one night after which it died. He

discarded it over a fence but salvaged it after learning of its significance through a local newspaper item. Mr Clare's house is approximately 200 metres from where I first saw the bird.

The feathered skeleton of the bird has now been lodged at the South Australian Museum (reg. no. B 45649).

DISCUSSION

Pizzey (1984) notes that some Spangled Drongos regularly overwinter in Queensland and on the central coast of New South Wales, winter vagrants occurring near Melbourne and in northern Tasmania. Possibly, this bird and the one reported earlier by Pedler (1974) may have been vagrant overwintering birds.

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REFERENCES

- Pedler, L. P. 1974. First record of the Spangled Drongo *Chibia bracteata* in South Australia. *S. Aust. Orn.* 26: 170.
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