

WHITE-NECKED HERON SIGHTINGS

A bird rare to Western Australia, the White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) has been sighted during the past year in southern parts of the State. District Wildlife Officer K. Miller advised that numerous sightings had been made in Moora, Gingin, Jurien, Wannamal and Dandaragan areas. Numbers of these long-billed waders have also been seen on the outskirts of Perth and as far afield as the eastern wheatbelt and Margaret River. The birds were also seen at Herdsman Lake and in the air near the Swan River at Maylands. It is believed that the herons had probably migrated from the Northern Territory and Eastern States on the succession of tropical cyclones, in the past year.

As its name implies, the bird has a white neck and head with the rest of its body a dark gun-metal grey, almost black. Sometimes the head and neck could appear darker as a result of feeding in muddy waters.

The white necked species is the second biggest of the Australian herons, smaller than the rare Great-billed Heron and bigger than the White-faced Heron, an elegant blue-grey bird common in the South West and sometimes called the Blue Crane.

The White-Necked Heron is normally a solitary feeder preferring shallow waters and wet grass. When in flight, the species is conspicuous by the white patches at the bend on the underside of its dark wings.

The bird nests mainly in South-eastern Australia but travels north along the coast to feed in tropical rains.

There have been eight recorded "flare-ups" in Western Australia between 1923 and the present, with a few known nestings in the Murchison and Gascoyne areas.



White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*)