

# ALBINO AUSTRALIAN RAVEN

(*Corvus coronoides*)

On January 25, 1979, Wildlife Officer Bernard Masters investigated three reports that a "white crow" was flying around the Paynedale area, about 10 km south-east of Capel (half way between Bunbury and Busselton).

Wildlife Officer Masters had no trouble in locating the bird which he believed was an albino Australian Raven. The bird was pure white, except for a slight orange-yellow tinge to the beak and legs. It appeared normal in all other respects.

Although Australian Ravens are often found in flocks, the albino bird appeared to lead a more solitary life. However, it was seen several times feeding on the road in the company of other ravens, none of which made aggressive moves against it.

Wildlife Officer Masters did not hear the bird call at any stage of his hour-long observation. Its flight, feeding habits, size etc., did not seem in any way abnormal.

The albino mutation in the raven species is estimated to occur one in every ten million, a similar ratio as in humans.

Australian Ravens do not breed until they are three or more years old. Until then they feed nomadically in flocks of thirty or more. When a mate has been found, the pair occupies a territory of about 110 hectares. It is in this selected area that they find most of their food, roost and breed.

Australian Ravens pair for life and breeding pairs remain in their territory all the year around. They have no courtship displays apart from preening each other and occasional chasing flights. The ravens are always together and this is probably why they do not need elaborate courtship displays.

Irrespective of latitude, Australian Ravens breed in spring. Egg-laying begins in July and rarely continues beyond September. Generally the eggs are incubated for 20 days and the young stay in the nest for about 43 days. Having left the nest the young birds remain in their parents' territory for 3-4 months. At first they are fed by their parents but become increasingly independent, as they get older.

The Australian Raven is found in all Australian States except Tasmania.