

ALBINO GREY CURRAWONG

Leonard Wall

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On October 1988 I was included in a walking party from Stormlea to Cape Raoul on Tasman Peninsula.

Just after setting out from the end of the road a large white bird was seen alighting in a eucalypt tree on the edge of a paddock about 300 metres ahead of us. My first thought was of a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo but I realised that its tail was too short for that bird and my mind then turned to a White Goshawk. That was ruled out also because the bill was straight, long and pale yellow.

Before we had been able to approach much further the bird flew off into the forest accompanied by a small party of Grey Currawongs and I was satisfied then that it was an albino of that species.

On our return about five hours later the lone white bird was seen in the same vicinity but this time it was foraging on the ground. By using available cover we were able to approach more closely and obtain a good view of it, but the bird was very shy and soon took flight joining the others of the Grey Currawong party and retiring to the forest. We did not pursue them further as we had no doubt about its identity.

This was the only party of these birds seen that day, although we did see and hear a few Black Currawongs about three kms nearer to Cape Raoul. The prominent white patches in the wings of the Grey Currawongs left us in no doubt as to their identity. However, we didn't get near enough to the white bird to see the colour of its eyes so that some doubt may be expressed as to whether it was a true albino, but the pale yellow of its bill, which normally would be black reinforces my belief that it was an albino.

An interesting comment subsequently came from a local resident who, a week after my sighting, independently described this bird and exactly where it could be found to a member of the Bird Observers' Association of Tasmania.