

feeding on carrion (sheep carcasses)'. Van Tets (1976) and Hancock & Elliott (1978) do not mention carrion as a food for the White-faced Heron. The most studied and best known heron — the Grey Heron *A. cinerea* of the Palearctic — is also known to be particularly unselective in the variety of its food, but has not been recorded as feeding on carrion (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

Van Tyne & Berger (1976) recorded the following foods for the heron family Ardeidae as a whole: fish, amphibians, reptiles, crustaceans, insects, molluscs, rodents, young birds. Thus carrion as food for any of the Ardeidae must be regarded as very rare or exceptional.

References

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Xanthochroism in the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Xanthochroism, an abnormal yellow colouration, is sometimes seen in captive birds, but is very rare in the wild. This note describes xanthochroism in a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* observed in Victoria. The House Sparrow was successfully introduced to Australia between 1863 and 1872 and is now abundant in most suitable habitats in Eastern Australia.

On 13 September 1981 I was at the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Farm, Werribee, with K. N. G. Simpson and Peter Klapste. At 1010 hours Simpson saw in the distance a small yellow bird which we thought at first was an escaped domestic Canary *Serinus canaria*. We watched it through binoculars from a closer position and recognised it as an abnormally plumaged, i.e. xanthochroistic, House Sparrow. It kept company with the other normal coloured House Sparrows but was shy. On 17 October 1981 with Peter Klapste I saw this yellow House Sparrow once again. We noticed it sitting on a fence at 1020 hours and were able to approach and observe it through binoculars from inside the car at distances down to eight metres. The sparrow was yellow all over and once again was among normally coloured birds of the same species.

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