

# BirdLife Australia Rareites Committee

**Name-** Les George

**Species name-** Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)

**Date/time of observation-** First identification made at approx 07:30 on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018 from a single distant photograph.

**First/last date of appearance-** 18-28<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

**Location-** Violet Creek, Carnarvon (24°53'48" S 113°39'58" E)

**Habitat-** Mangroves

**Sighting conditions-** Sunshine, clear skies.

This species has never been seen here before. This bird was actually flushed at relatively close quarters prior to identification from photograph but I passed it off as a White-faced Heron. This species common in this area and what other long legged/necked bird having a largely grey body and wings could it be. When photographed it was still seen as a White-faced Heron, it was only on reviewing on the rear screen that it was seen to be a Purple Heron. On recognition, I thought I had better find this bird. On my return to my vehicle I once again flushed this bird from the very same area it had flushed earlier. On this occasion it flew into dense mangroves and was not seen again that day.

I returned the following afternoon with camera in hope of sighting again and getting better shots. This time from the more easily accessed part of Violet Creek from McKenna Street. I was in luck, but the bird had seen me first and flew. It was only at this time I realised how ill prepared I was, I had not even turned the camera on. However I did manage five frames of this bird departing over the mangroves into a strong southerly wind.

A number of other observers saw or reported to me that they had seen this bird.

First was George Swan, well known bird guide from Broome.

Others include Paul Newman, Sue Abbotts, Xenia Dennett, Bill Betts and companion, Darryl Abbott, Brian Huggett.

I spoke to Dan Mantle, Plaxy Barrett et al on 30<sup>th</sup> November; they told me that another party had seen this bird on 28<sup>th</sup>. Steve Reynolds et al from memory.

This was the last occasion I am aware of that this bird was seen.

I am 100% confident this was a Purple Heron. I am happy for BARC to display images I took of this bird.

There are no historical records of this species having been seen in this area previously though I am aware of a previously accepted record from metropolitan Perth by a South African observer.

## **Description**

Large bird comparable in shape and size to larger herons or egrets, superficially like White-faced Heron thought slightly larger. Identification made solely from the darker lines down the neck of bird in flight. I thought this likely an immature bird as it could be seen to have little rufous colouration of the under-belly and virtually non-existent on underwings. At no time was any detailed observation made as this bird was mostly seen from the rear while flying away from observer. Best descriptions can only be made from photographs.

I have had previous experience with this species having seen one in Kenya in November 2006 and again in Sabah (Borneo) in 2010. I have also seen one more recently in Singapore with further opportunities for better photographs.



