

12½ inches. The length of the foot is 6 inches, and its breadth 2 inches. The feet and toes are black, and the under surface of the foot deeply serrated, evidently to prevent the bird from slipping on the smooth, wet rocks or ice. There are three long toes and one small one, half an inch in length, on the upper inner side, just at the commencement of the toes, and which is practically useless. The tail feathers are about 2½ inches long, and are strong and bristly and light bluish at the tip, the rest being dark. A few feathers are also sprouting, principally above the tail, about an inch long, and are also light blue at the end. From the tip of almost each of the segments of these young feathers a thread of down springs, to the length of 1¾ inches. The down from the end segments of the new feathers is mostly intact, but the barbules from the lower ones are not so numerous, having either been broken off through abrasion or possibly not having grown. On the feather I have before me there are 32 filaments of down, but they vary in the different feathers. The eyes are dark brown, and the birds are able to partially protect them with a transparent covering, which they can close over the eye from the front under the eyelid. They frequently seem to do it—sometimes right over, and at other times half-way. The ears are large, with an almost circular patch of dark bare skin round them, on a level with but 1½ inches back from the gape. The total length of the bird, from the tip of the beak to the end of the tail, is 2 feet 2 inches.

Young "Kings" in captivity are very sociable, often following anyone about who may be near, having no fear of man. They are often silent when by themselves, but on seeing anyone approaching at once keep uttering their squeaky, high-pitched note, and moving their heads freely about, possibly expecting food. They have various ways of resting. Occasionally they will lie flat down, but generally stand up, sometimes bending forward until their head rests against their body about half-way down; at other times they just bend their head over until it rests on the upper portion of their body, either on the front or on the side—it seems immaterial which—and so go to sleep. They never seem to duck their head under their scanty wing. The least unusual sound will quickly wake them.

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### Stray Feathers.

A LAUNCESTON NOTE.—During the first week in February Starlings appeared for the first time in our and several other gardens in Launceston. In all probability they came from the flocks down the West Tamar district. English Skylarks, which until lately could be heard every morning at Invermay, a suburb of Launceston, have been all destroyed by "pot-hunters."—FRANK M. LITTLER. 10/3/02.

RED-CAPPED ROBIN IN NORTH QUEENSLAND.—Mr. Fred. L. Berney, at Richmond, about the beginning of April, shot for identification a female Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*), a species not previously recorded for Northern Queensland.

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A FIGHTING FLYCATCHER.—A little *Rhipidura tricolor* has been fighting his own shadow at the windows from end of November to middle of March. We think he has since died of starvation, as he waxed thinner and thinner daily, and never went away to get a decent meal.—S. B. 2/4/02.

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BUTCHER-BIRDS v. DRAGON-FLIES.—At Easter, during a duck-shooting excursion, I noticed a Butcher-Bird feeding on Dragon-flies that were flying over water. The bird seemed to be an expert at the game, for he never missed one at which he darted.—LANCE LE SOUEF, South Perth, W.A.

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A LATE BROOD OF QUAIL.—Mr. A. Mattingley found, on the 21st April, in the Alexandra district, Upper Goulburn River (Vic.), a nest of Brown Quail (*Synæcus australis*) containing 10 chicks not long hatched. He also observed several immature Quails on the same date.

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A FORSAKEN ROOKERY.—*Re* Mutton-Birds at Sorrento, I found an old rookery on the Cape Schanck side, that had been deserted many years, and only bones of the birds scattered about it. The Crown Ranger told Mr. Mattingley, sen., that none of these birds has nested on the mainland for the past 10 years, as the foxes killed them all, and he used to find scores lying about on the old rookery with their heads bitten off. I also went well over the Portsea side, but saw no signs.—D. LE SOUËF.

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NIDIFICATION OF WHITE-TAILED COCKATOO.—Mr. Bruce Leake mentions that in the three nests of this Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudini*) he has found in Western Australia, in every case one of the eggs was a good deal more advanced in incubation than the other. A reference to the same subject has been made in Mr. Campbell's book, "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," p. 605, showing that Black Cockatoos generally lay their second egg a week after the other, which will quite account for the difference in incubation.—D. LE SOUËF.

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HERBERT RIVER (N.Q.) NOTES.—*Black-headed Pardalote*.—On 30th of April last, while walking close to the edge of a

shallow, open well in sandy soil, I disturbed a Pardalote (*P. melanocephalus*) from its nest. On digging the nest out I found two eggs, both considerably incubated. Surely April is a curious time to breed.

*Dacelo leachii* as a Poultry Thief.—This bird bears a rather evil reputation in this district as a chicken-stealer. That it does kill and eat chickens in considerable numbers there is no doubt, for the residents here agree in considering it as bad as a hawk. It deals with chickens just as with lizards, &c., pouncing on and carrying them off to a neighbouring tree, where, after knocking their brains out against a limb, it swallows them whole. The great Kingfisher often seizes the chicks in spite of a brave resistance on the part of the mother. Only small chickens, up to about two or three weeks old, are taken. This bad habit of an otherwise harmless and useful bird will probably lead to the destruction of a large number, the *Birds Protection Act* notwithstanding.

*A Singular Nesting Site.*—A few days ago I found a nest of the Crimson Finch (*Neochmia phaëton*) in a curious position. It was placed in the thatch of a grass-built hut, just below the edge of the roof and close to the door, the hut at the time being occupied by some Chinamen. It was firmly wedged in, the entrance being scarcely visible, and contained three eggs in a very advanced stage of incubation. Though by far the greater number of these Finches build in this district in the pandanus palms, I have often found their nests in growing sugar-cane, wedged in amongst the dead "trash" which adheres to the stalk. Both the Crimson Finch and the Chestnut-breasted (*Munia castaneithorax*) are at present breeding plentifully, and appear to do so all the year round.—EDGAR H. WEBB. Macknade, N.Q., 12/5/02.

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"THE BITER BIT."—As Mr. Balke, Presbyterian missionary, was travelling from Ailsa to Warracknabeal, his attention was attracted by something rose-coloured rising up and down from the ground. Drawing nearer, he was surprised to find a Hawk (Harrier) with a Rose-breasted Cockatoo attached to it, the Cockatoo having hold of the Hawk by the two legs (thighs). The Hawk tried in vain to "get at" the Cockatoo till it (the Hawk) was completely exhausted. Mr. Balke finished the Hawk with a stick, and as soon as it lay dead the Cockatoo loosed its grip, and, to Mr. Balke's intense surprise, said, "Poor Cockie!" Mr. Balke, acting the "Good Samaritan," took the bird home; and an advertisement brought the rightful owner, who lived several miles from where Mr. Balke came across the fight.—JOSEPH A. HILL. Kewell, Vic., 3/5/02.

EFFECTS OF RABBIT-POISONING ON BIRDS.—Hawks, Ravens, and Magpies, so far as I have observed, do not eat the poison at first hand. Crows, and more rarely Magpies, attack the carcasses, going straight for the stomach, which probably in most cases contains a quantity of unoxylized phosphorus, ready to burn whenever the contents of the stomach are dry enough. The birds get the benefit of this, and succumb. The roosting-places of the Crows are marked by their bodies in the morning, but the Magpies die all over the place. The Hawks seem to act as complete scavengers, except that they leave the digestive organs alone. The Hawks seen about the flats just now are rarely seen at any other season. Fights between Crows and Hawks are common, especially about 6 a.m. Two Crows will attack one Hawk, not very savagely, but just enough to let him know that his presence at a distance is desired. The Hawks generally accompany the Cockatoos (Sulphur-crested), which put an end to sleep anywhere within a mile. I have never seen enough Cockatoos' feathers to lead me to think that the Hawks had killed one. So far as I have noticed, the Cockatoo is pugnacious until fighting begins. I think many of the farmers' friends could be saved from self-destruction if the farmers would bury the rabbits. This could be done to advantage by pushing them into the burrows near at hand. A forked stick is the only tool required, and, as a rule, a round of the paddock after each poisoning will suffice.—JAMES WILSON. Tawonga, Vic.

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WESTERN NOTES.—I bought a young Red-tailed Cockatoo the other day from a man who took it from the nest at Mt. Malcolm. It was a *Calyptorhynchus stellatus*, and died, but I am getting an older one from him, which has lived for some time in captivity. I have a lovely pair of young Kites, I think the Square-tailed. There are a fine lot of Hawks over here. I am nearly certain that I saw a Grey Falcon (*Falco hypoleucus*) a day or two ago. Mr. Hall does not give it as found here. It flew just over my head, with a fine mullet, about 2 lbs., in its claws, and I particularly noted the black centres of the feathers. The Whistling Eagles nest within a couple of miles of the Zoo, and often fly over with fish, and one went last season with a big snake (black, I think). I went shooting the other day, and saw a lot of Emus; they live in very poor country, and seem, from their droppings, to live principally on cranberries, or Emu berries, as they are called over here. On the plains I noted Singing Honey-eaters, and also two other kinds which I couldn't identify; they were miles from water. There are many Bustards up there, and in the jarrah belts many Twenty-eight or Yellow-collared Parrakeets and Red-capped Parrakeets (*Porphyro-*

*cephalus spurius*). There were few Ducks. I saw the Black Duck, Teal, Hardhead or White-eye (*Nyroca australis*), and Mountain Duck, also a few Southern Stone Plover, and I caught a beautiful Freckled Podargus, but pulled his tail out, so let him go. Bee-eaters, or *Merops*, are very plentiful this season, and they were in trees just over the swamps in numbers. Bitterns were common. One of our party described a pair of wonderful green goose-like birds which he had shot in the lake on a previous visit, 60 miles north of Perth, and there is no doubt but they were a pair of Green Goose-Teal (*Nettopus pulchellus*). Freckled Duck are fairly common over here, and are called "Grey Duck."—E. A. LE SOUËF. 4/2/02.

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A BICYCLE SPIN WITH EMUS.—In some parts of Gippsland there are still a few Emus, which, fortunately being unmolested, are very quiet, and if they happen to be near the road take stock of passers by without moving a feather. Ordinary traffic they are used to, but a man on a bicycle was apparently unknown to some of them. Lately, while cycling at the back of Lake Tyers, near the Nowa Nowa arm, I came suddenly alongside five Emus among the bracken fern. I was moving slowly, by reason of the bad road. The Emus were about 20 paces to the right of the track, and evidently they said, "What manner of 'bird' might this be?" and to my wonder they moved along at my pace for fully a quarter of a mile—I thought there must have been a barbed-wire fence alongside them, but there was not. Having satisfied their curiosity they quickened pace, and with a left wheel made to cross the road about a chain ahead of me. I was on for fun, too, and with a sudden spurt I came quite close to them, and, sitting up, I gave a good colonial yell, which made the big birds fairly "streak" over the road in a hurry. The hindermost one I could almost touch, and in excessive haste the bird came a beautiful "cropper" amongst the logs and ferns. I stopped and looked round. They did likewise. I'm not sure whether they considered my species to be extinct or that perhaps I was "protected." I regretted not having my hand camera, for I certainly could have made an interesting "snap."—J. P. CAMPBELL. Murrumbidgee, Vic.

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SWIFTS ROOSTING.—Referring to Mr. Le Souëf's note on the migration of Spine-tailed Swifts in the last number of *The Emu*, p. 149, and his inquiry as to whether any member of the Aust. O.U. has observed this bird resting, I am pleased to say that on 8th March last, whilst returning from Mornington in company of Mrs. Shepherd and family, I observed a Swift circling round and round a tall messmate tree (eucalypt) on the public reserve at Somerville. It was just about dusk, and I was convinced that the bird intended roosting in the tree. It

returned several times, each time dashing close to the thick branches near the top of the tree and finally dashed into the thickest mass of leaves, making a rustling noise as though the bird was hardly able to steady itself. It was by this time almost dark, and I remained close to the tree for upwards of 15 minutes, and the bird never left the tree, hence I am certain it roosted there. Since this instance occurred I saw another Swift circling around a tall pine (*P. insignis*), where I have no doubt it rested for the night.—G. E. SHEPHERD. Somerville, Vic.

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PIED CORMORANTS NESTING IN WESTERN PORT.—About 15th March, 1901, my friend Mr. J. Brown noticed Pied Cormorants (*P. hypoleucus*) in large numbers on the east side of French Island. The birds were sitting upon tall mangroves, which had been stripped of leaves and branchlets for the construction of their nests, as many as a dozen of these nests being located in one tree. The nests were about 2 feet across, constructed entirely of the green leaves and small branchlets of the mangroves. At this time the nests were used apparently for roosting purposes, and the young had been reared the previous spring. I suggested that a good look-out be kept the ensuing spring.

About the end of August the birds commenced to repair the old nests with green leaves, and on the 15th September I visited the locality, arriving at midnight with a favourable tide. On pushing the boat among the mangroves the birds flew off the nests in the immediate vicinity, and on examining some dozen nests in one large mangrove about half the number contained one egg apiece. I removed one only, intending to revisit the place again in a week's time. Unfavourable weather prevailed, however, and it was not until the 29th September that I was enabled to again visit the locality, when to my dismay I found the nests deserted, not a bird being visible or an egg to be found. A solitary Raven was seen leaving the spot with an egg in its beak, evidently taking it off to its nest in the timber near. The fact of these birds nesting in this locality is somewhat remarkable, as the oldest local residents or fishermen have never seen them nesting previously in any part of Western Port Bay. Possibly some of the fishermen had visited the rookery between the date of our first and second visits, and from ignorance, no doubt, shot some of the birds, frightening the balance away. I saw one dead bird hanging from one of the mangroves in which some of the nests were situated. The rookery contained about 150 nests altogether, the largest mangroves only being utilized as nesting sites, and the trees favoured were quite denuded of foliage.—G. E. SHEPHERD. Somerville.

MARSH TERNS AND GREBES.—Of recent years the Marsh Tern (*Hydrochelidon hybrida*) has been a regular visitor to the Geelong district, haunting, during late spring and summer, the lower reaches of the Barwon River and the wide, weed-grown shallows of Lake Reedy, a marsh of some thousands of acres on the north side of the river. Twice in past seasons I had spent half a day in vain attempts to find the chosen nesting-spot of the hundreds of dusky, fairy-like birds that hawked constantly overhead. This season (1901) I was successful. The 15th December was a warm day, making it pleasant to wade in, through the cool water and long green flowering plants of the marsh, towards the centre, where the birds hovered thickest; but the birds dispersed and I found nothing, and so turned to the right, in continuance of the circular route that I was following. In half an hour I was three-parts back to the starting-point, and had given up the search, when my eye was caught by something white on top of the water among the short reeds in front. I walked over, and picked up a dead Tern. It was lying across a nest platform with broken egg-shells on it. A few yards away were another nest and more shells, then another and another, till I had found 40 or more, all with the beautiful mottled litter of broken shells in or around them, save one, which held dead young. The birds had flown from the rest. The nests were built up from the bottom in water about 2 feet deep, the upper part formed of dry stalks of slender reeds. On the outside edge of the colony I was surprised to discover a nest of the Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps nestor*) with three fresh eggs—doubly surprised, because I had not seen a Grebe all the afternoon, and because it was the first time I had ever observed any trace of this bird in the district. Five minutes later I found myself traversing a second and smaller group of empty nests of the Marsh Tern; and in its centre, not 10 feet from each other, were two more Hoary-headed Grebes' nests, one with three eggs and one with four. A fourth, further away, had only broken shells. The nests were more roughly made than the Terns', being composed of water-weeds thickly piled together, and wet through from top to bottom. These Grebes must be very cunning birds, for not so much as a ripple in the quiet water did I see for sign of their presence, and yet the eggs were fresh, showing by their varying shades from dirty white to brown the order of their laying. Where the birds were hiding I could not guess, but I wondered at their craft in this respect and at the love of company—or is it a feeling of "safety in numbers?"—that makes them consort thus at nesting-time with the Terns.

—C. F. BELCHER. Geelong.