

## Description of two New Nests and Eggs from North-West Australia.

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With Field Notes by the Collector, G. F. HILL.

WHITE-TAILED ROBIN (*Pæcilodryas pulverulentus*).

*Nest.*—Rather a compact and open cup-shaped structure, resembling some of the smaller forms of those constructed by the *Eopsaltria*. It is placed in the fork of a small horizontal branch of a mangrove tree (*Avicennia*), and is constructed principally of strips of bark, wound round and fastened with cobwebs, and long strips of dry bark hang perpendicularly all around outside, some pieces being almost 3 inches in length. The nest is lined inside with fine dry roots and grass.

*Eggs.*—Clutch of two eggs, roundish ovals in shape, texture of shell fine, surface glossy, and minutely pitted all over, this feature becoming conspicuous under the lens; ground colour of a dull greenish-stone, marked with small round spots of reddish-brown, of different shades, and lilac, the latter appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell. In specimen *a* the markings are well distributed over the shell, while in specimen *b* they are chiefly confined to the larger end, where they form a rather regular zone, and the ground colour over which this zone of markings passes is of a light salmon-brown. In general appearance the eggs approach those of *Pæcilodryas cerviniventris*, rather more than those of the *Eopsaltria* genus. The pair measure in inches:—(*a*) 0.76 x 0.62, (*b*) 0.77 x 0.62. Another pair of these eggs, which are the co-types, were taken in the same locality, and measure:—(*a*) 0.76 x 0.61, (*b*) 0.74 x 0.59. They are roundish ovals in shape, ground colour of a dull greenish-stone, fading into a light-brown, which gradually darkens towards the larger end, and this is specially noticeable in specimen *a*. This graduation in the ground colouring is after the manner of that shown in some eggs of *Petræca bicolor*. Both eggs are spotted with small dull markings of reddish-brown, intermingled with a few very indistinct spots of pale lilac. Specimen *a* is much darker at the larger end than specimen *b*.

[I saw the birds amongst the mangrove roots and low branches in a few places on the eastern side of Napier Broome Bay, where they were fairly numerous. In a few of the more open patches of mangrove I was able to watch the birds building, but only in one case, where I was able to get away unobserved, did they complete and lay in the nests. In most instances I was observed, and the nest was at once abandoned. The first note of their nesting was recorded on 31st January, 1910, when, after several days' watching, a nest ready for eggs was found. Subsequent visits proved, however, that the nest had been deserted. With this knowledge of their habits to work upon, renewed efforts were made, and on 20th February, 1910, after a long wait in the mosquito-infested mangroves, the female bird was seen flying

towards an isolated mangrove bush some 60 yards away. The water was too deep to wade to the nest, so I decided to return on the following morning, when the tide would be out. A photograph of the eggs and nest (*in situ*) was taken on the following day, and the eggs secured, but to my disgust they were already chipped on my arrival at camp. Similar methods were employed in locating the nest of the next pair of birds until the attacks of mosquitoes and sand-flies became unbearable, and then abandoned in favour of a tree to tree search as the tide permitted, and on 2nd March, 1910, after examining a considerable area in this fashion, the nest was found in a dense mangrove bush, 3 feet above spring tide level, and two eggs in a somewhat advanced state of incubation were taken. A second nest commenced on this date was abandoned. Another pair of birds were heard in a thick, stunted patch of mangroves, where it was impossible to watch their movements. Dividing the surrounding area into rough blocks, a careful search was made of every tree until the nest, containing two fresh eggs, was found (26th March, 1910). This nest was built in a small dead mangrove bush 3 feet above water level, and almost hidden by leaves of neighbouring bushes.

*Dimensions of nests in inches*:—(a) Outside—length 3, breadth  $2\frac{3}{5}$ , depth  $2\frac{1}{10}$ ; inside—length,  $2\frac{1}{10}$ , breadth  $1\frac{3}{5}$ , depth  $1\frac{1}{10}$ . (b) Outside—length  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , breadth  $2\frac{1}{5}$ , depth  $2\frac{4}{5}$ ; inside—length  $2\frac{1}{5}$ , breadth  $1\frac{4}{5}$ , depth 1.

The food consists entirely of minute crabs, shell-fish, crustaceans, and a species of small black ant, which is plentiful on the mangroves.]

#### LAVENDER-FLANKED WREN (*Malurus dulcis*).

*Nest*.—Dome-shaped, and similar to those of the other members of the genus.

*Eggs*.—Three in number, and closely resemble those of *M. cyanochlamys*. Ground colour of a very delicate pinkish-white. Shell fine, but with very little gloss. Specimens *b* and *c* are marked all over, and particularly at the larger end, with small spots and minute specks of dull reddish-brown, while specimen *a*, which is covered with small spots of the same colour, is heavily blotched at the larger apex with markings of a much darker reddish-brown than is the case with the other two specimens. The eggs are stout ovals in shape, and measure as follows:—(a) 0.62 x 0.51, (b) 0.62 x 0.49, (c) 0.63 x 0.50 inch.

[The habitat of this species, so far as my observations went, is restricted to the rocky sandstone country near the eastern side of Napier Broome Bay. September and the early part of October appears to be the general nesting season. One set of three eggs was the only result of many careful searches during the latter part of October, November, and December, 1909. After the nesting season these birds are generally seen in parties of from 6 to 10 birds, the latter number being somewhat unusual. One party of 10 birds contained 5 adult males, one moulting and 4 dull-

plumaged birds (5th March, 1910), while another of 6 birds contained 2 adult males and 4 dull-plumaged birds.

The nest from which the eggs (type set) were taken (14th December, 1909) was placed in a dead branch lying amongst the rocks, and built of acacia leaves on the outside and grass on the inside. The eggs rested on a layer of rootlets, while the upper part of the egg chamber was thickly lined with kangaroo fur. Many old nests were found in similar positions and built of the same materials.]

### Stray Feathers.

A LONG WAY FROM HIS BEAT.—On the 17th instant an opossum-hunter brought to my camp for identification a magnificent White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliastur leucogaster*), which he had shot while it was making a meal, in company with some Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*), at a heap of skinned opossum carcasses. My camp on the Burnett River—a small stream here—is 90 miles from the nearest point of the coast. I carefully measured the span from wing-tip to wing-tip, and found it to be 6 feet 10 inches.—F. B. C. FORD. Survey Camp, *via* Bayswater (Q.), 22/5/10.

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CUCKOO NOTES.—Cuckoos have visited us in large numbers this season. They are especially plentiful around Frankston and Ringwood at present. In company with Messrs. F. E. Wilson and H. Cowderoy recently I found a nest of the White-eared Honey-eater (*Ptilotis leucotis*), containing an egg of the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus inornatus*), and in a nest of the White-throated Thickhead (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) a Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis rufulus*) had deposited her egg. The nest also held an egg of the Thickhead. The latter is probably a new record of a foster-parent.—L. G. CHANDLER. Malvern, 12/9/10.

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WOOD-SWALLOW AND CUCKOO.—On 10th December, 1909, I discovered, on a branchlet of a tall red gum overhanging the Namoi River at Manilla, a nest of *Artamus superciliosus*. My attention was attracted by the squeaking and fluttering of a young Cuckoo (*Cuculus inornatus*). I saw the Wood-Swallow (female) leave the nest, fly from the tree, and return again to the young bird and feed it. After satisfying the fledgling's wants she returned to her nest. As soon as the Wood-Swallow was nicely settled the Cuckoo would again commence calling and fluttering its wings. The foster-mother once more satisfied the voracious appetite. These trips were repeated six times within about 40 minutes. The male Wood-Swallow kept well away from the nest, calling and flying from bough to bough.—H. BURRELL. Manilla, N.S.W., 17/5/10.