

Descriptions of two Nests and Eggs.

By H. L. WHITE, R.A.O.U., BELLTREES (N.S.W.)

***Megalurus striatus* (Milligan).**

Nest.—Loosely constructed of dried grass, warmly lined with Duck and Bald-Coot feathers, and placed low down in clump of reeds growing in water. A pair of birds has been received for identification.

Clutch.—Four eggs. (1) Measuring—*a*, .67 x .53; *b*, .69 x .53; *c*, .67 x .52; *d*, .66 x .51. Surface of shell smooth and without gloss; ground colour pinkish-white, rather thickly covered all over with small spots of brownish-red, which increase towards the larger end, where they form a distinct zone. (2) Measuring—*a*, .72 x .54; *b*, .72 x .54; *c*, .72 x .52; *d*, .70 x .54. Similar in colour to clutch 1, but the markings are not so numerous, nor do they form such a well-defined zone at the larger end.

Both clutches are similar to eggs of *Megalurus gramineus*, but the markings are larger, and not so thickly distributed over the shell; the colouring is also much brighter than in *M. gramineus*, and more nearly approaches that of *M. galactotes*.

These eggs were collected for me by Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock at Wilson's Inlet, near Albany (W.A.), October and November, 1911.

***Pseudogerygone jacksoni* (Campbell, *ante*, p. 247).**

Nest.—The usual *Gerygone* shape, suspended from a thin twig of a green coolibar tree at a height of 8 feet from the ground. Total length, 9 inches (including a tail of 4 inches); the hooded entrance (1 inch in circumference) almost in the centre of the nest proper.

The nest is constructed of fine shreds of bark, matted together with spiders' web and ornamented with spiders' white egg-bags, and lined with wool and feathers.

Eggs.—Type clutch of three (9/10/1911). Shape, long ovals; texture of shell fine, surface slightly glossy; ground colour delicate pinkish-white, finely spotted all over with reddish-brown, particularly at the larger end, where a well-defined zone of larger markings of reddish-brown occurs. The spots or blotches forming the zones in specimens *a* and *c* are much larger than those in specimen *b*, which is also similarly zoned, except that the markings are composed of a mass of minute specks and not blotches. Dimensions in parts of an inch:—*a*, 0.68 x 0.44; *b*, 0.68 x 0.45; *c*, 0.68 x 0.44.

Observations.—Mr. Jackson, the collector, states that "Ten nests were found getting built, five of which were ransacked and pulled to pieces by some nest-robbing creatures. This usually took place just as the structures were nearing completion. The first nest found contained a clutch of three eggs, on 9th October (1911), but the remaining four only contained two eggs each, although ample time was allowed for the third egg

to be laid. The nests were placed at heights varying from 5 to 9 feet, and well hidden in the masses of leaves of the green suckers growing from the bases of ringbarked coolibar and bibble box trees (eucalypts). The nests and eggs closely resemble those of *Gerygone albigularis*, except that they are somewhat smaller."

Notes on the Native-Hen (*Tribonyx mortieri*).

By (MISS) J. A. FLETCHER, TASMANIA.

THE grassy flats along the banks of the South Esk and Macquarie Rivers are favourite resorts of the Tribonyx, and to observe the birds is somewhat easy, provided the observer remains quiet. The Native-Hens appear to dread movement more than they do noise. I remember a certain flat along the Esk with an area of about 10 acres. Except on the river frontage, this strip was bounded by low, rocky, barren hills, with an anabranch of the river running in a semicircle at their base. The creeklet had a great number of water-weeds, reeds, and rushes growing in it. Here the Native-Hens were present in great numbers at all periods of the year. When disturbed they ran for shelter to the bracken ferns on the hills. Very rarely they attempted to escape by crossing the river. Presently a few of the older birds, presumably males, would return and begin to eat the grass. By degrees the others also returned, though there were always a few individuals ready to run at the slightest movement.

Several of these Native-Hens were very pugnacious, and chased intruders from the particular patch of ground they considered to be their own. They would run at the trespassing bird with head held low and wings partly down, uttering at the same time a noise resembling the grunt of a pig. At other times there would be a general chorus of their "saw-sharpening" call, the birds darting backwards and forwards in an apparently senseless manner. I have watched them crossing a river when wishing a new feeding ground. Once I counted a dozen birds which had been feeding on a low hill and were returning home. They swam one behind the other, but appeared rather to "tread water" than to swim, and to keep their bodies below the surface.

Once I saw a Native-Hen try to escape observation by walking beneath the water. Amid a bank of ferns I knew that a Tribonyx had her nest. Below this bank was a hole in the river, 4 feet deep, with a pebbly bottom. I stood on a log and with a long stick probed the ferns above the nest. Instantly there was a splash, and, looking down, I saw the bird sink to the bottom and run along the river's bed up stream a little distance and then dash out and race with full speed across the opposite flat. I jumped down among the ferns, and, parting them to view the eggs, saw a snake making its way slowly across the nest. I was soon back on the log again.