

Additional Notes on the Helmeted Honey-eater (*Ptilotis cassidix*).

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SINCE the publication of a paper by Mr. L. G. Chandler and myself on this bird (see *The Emu*, vol. x., p. 37), I have collected the following additional notes.

After removing a clutch of eggs early in the season I affixed a few pieces of pink cotton wool in a fork of a tea-tree to see if the birds would utilize it in their new nest. On finding their nest



Yellow-tufted Honey-eater (*Ptilotis cassidix*) on Nest.

some time later, I was pleased to see a pair of eggs resting on a lining composed of the cotton wool. One nest found during the season had its lining composed entirely of the green leaves of a shrub (*Pomaderris apetala*).

While observing one nest containing young I was surprised to see that the chicks were attended by two pairs of adult birds, who

were sometimes all perched by the nest at the same time. Observations this year substantiated my theory that these Honey-eaters are kept greatly in check by the Pallid Cuckoos (*C. pallidus*), as in nearly every case where nests were observed they either contained an egg or young of this Cuckoo. One nest in particular contained two Cuckoos' eggs, one having been built into the lining. As far as I am able to ascertain, Cuckoos are the only birds credited with devouring hairy caterpillars, but on one occasion I witnessed a Helmeted Honey-eater catch and eat a hairy caterpillar close beside me.

P. cassidix frequently lays one egg only, as several instances of this have come under my notice.

During the winter months these birds are exceedingly quiet, and, although frequently seen, it is rarely that they give utterance to a note of any kind. This year the birds in the Beaconsfield district started laying exceptionally early, nests being noted in the middle of August, a month earlier than I have seen them in previous seasons.

The following note illustrating the pugnacity of these birds was obtained during the breeding season:—A flock of Sittellas (*S. chrysoptera*), in their search for food, happened to enter the domain of *P. cassidix*, who immediately attacked them with such vigour that they were all forced to take wing, when in sheep-dog fashion he rounded the stragglers into the centre of the flock and kept them well bunched together till he had driven them from the locality.

I was also able to fill in two gaps in the immature stages of *P. cassidix*:—Two days old.—Gape lemon-yellow; throat orange-yellow; crown, dorsal and wing tracts covered with blackish-grey quills; eyes just opening; primaries and secondaries just emerging from quills; a faint line of quills extending down each side of abdomen, and legs slightly downy; feet bluish. Nine to ten days old.—Gape lemon-yellow; long quills on crown breaking, olive-yellow, with the down still adhering; quills of ear coverts breaking; yellow feathers on throat, and breast pale olive-green; primaries and secondaries black, edged with olive-green; abdomen and legs bare; back covered with dusky downy feathers; legs and feet bluish; irides light brown.

While taking the description of this immature bird, the parents returned with food. Knowing this pair of adult birds to be very tame, I gently extended my hand containing the young one towards one of them, and was delighted to see her alight upon my hand and feed the chick there.

I am indebted to Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley for the illustration accompanying these notes.