

## Bird-Life near Home.

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It is wonderful how quickly birds find out protected localities. While sitting upon my verandah for about half an hour one afternoon, it occurred to me to make a note of the species which came into my small flower garden in front of the house. Only a few yards away were three Rosella Parrots (*Platycercus eximius*) and two Parrakeets (*Psephotus hæmatonotus*) feeding on the berries of an African boxthorn bush, while hovering around within a few feet of my chair was a pair of Restless Flycatchers (*Sisura inquieta*). A pair of Black-and-White Fantails (*Rhipidura tricolor*) was busy feeding young, which had only a few days ago left the nest, built under the verandah in a grape vine. Then came along a very proud pair of Blue Wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*), with three very tiny young birds, which had left the nest, built in a creeper on the side of the house, only that morning. Two Honey-eaters (*Plilotis penicillata*) were feeding in the grape vines 4 feet above my head, while a pair of Magpie-Larks (*Grallina picata*) were flying to and from a small dam about 80 yards away in front of the house and a yellow box tree in the back yard, where they had a nest and young.

In the orchard at the side of the house was the nest of a pair of Yellow-rumped Acanthizas (*A. chrysorrhoa*), and in a peach tree a few yards away a Spotted-sided Finch (*Staganopleura guttata*) was busy with incubation duties. The next to put in an appearance was a beautiful little male Mistletoe-Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*), then a small flock of Chestnut-eared Finches (*Tæniopygia castanotis*). Not far away, outside the garden fence, were several Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) hunting for food, and a knowing old Raven (*Corone australis*), probably on the look-out for an egg of one of my Bronze Turkeys.

During the last two seasons many species of birds were observed breeding within a quarter of a mile of my house. At the dam in front of the house *Microtribonyx ventralis* and *Hypotaenidia philippinensis* were studied. The young of these two species running along the edge of the water much resembled black mice. In the water, attached to the drooping branches of willow trees, were the nests of the Grebe (*Podiceps novæ-hollandiæ*). Some few years ago, when there was only one pair of these birds here, the nest was robbed, and six days later the birds had a new nest built and the first egg was in it. They sat upon their eggs throughout the day, only leaving it when disturbed. Their young, until able to feed themselves, were very noisy. There were always a few pairs of the Black-fronted Dottrel (*Ægialitis melanops*) about the edge of the dam. Last year a bird was sitting on a nest on the edge of the buggy road, just outside the garden gate, 12 yards from the verandah. Unfortunately, a horse trod upon the eggs.

On the other side of the garden a pair of Warty-faced Honey-

eaters (*Meliphaga phrygia*) was very busy feeding their young in a nest built in a small box-tree, and a few yards further on a pair of Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Pteropodocys phasianella*) had been breeding for years. The young of these birds remained with their parents for at least twelve months, often being about the nesting locality during the whole year. Four seasons ago I was driving through open forest country, when I saw two Cuckoo-Shrikes fly from a tree, and found on the same branch two of their nests, within 3 feet of each other (young birds in each nest). Five adult birds were attending to the nestlings' wants. The following year I closely watched a pair of birds which nested near my house. They built in exactly the same spot as in the previous season. The three young birds took possession of an old Magpie-Lark's nest in a tree near by, and in it one of them deposited three eggs. The Grallinas had built a new nest in the same tree, and another pair had theirs in an adjoining tree. In other trees in the neighbourhood the following species were found breeding:—*Ptilotis penicillata*, *Myzantha garrula*, *Acanthochaera carunculata*, *Entomyza cyanotis*, *Tropidorhynchus corniculatus*, *Philemon citreigularis*, *Pomatorhinus frivolus*, *Coracina robusta*, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, *Artamus superciliosus*, *Artamus tenebrosus*, *Climacteris picumna*, *Lalage tricolor*, *Sisura inquieta*, *Aphelocephala leucopsis*, four species of Parrots, and seven other species which build upon the ground.

### "The Austral Avian Record."

*The Austral Avian Record*, No. 2, vol. i., has been published.\* It purports to contain the names (trinomials, except in one instance) of over 200 new forms or sub-species of Australian birds.

The additions have been made chiefly through the re-examination (after having passed such an expert as Professor Collett) of a collection made by Dr. Dahl, of Norway, in the Northern Territory some years ago, a large collection made by Mr. J. P. Rogers for Mr. Mathews on Melville Island, and a valuable gratuitous collection made more recently by Capt. S. A. White on Kangaroo Island, and elsewhere in South Australia.

As John Gould was known in his day, on account of his magnificent folio works, as the "pictorial" ornithologist, so Gregory Mathews may certainly be designated the "sub-specific" author, for his method in very minutely subdividing the Australian avifauna.

Fortunately, Mr. Mathews is editor of his own *Record* (without its wrapper there would be no name or authority for the articles contained)—an organ responsible to no society or union. If the multiplication of new forms be correct, then Australian ornithology obviously must be in a very primitive state, but should the differentiation of all known Australian birds on authoritative

\* No. 1 was noticed in *The Emu*, vol. xi., p. 260.