

Great Lake. I questioned Miss Wilson about the behaviour of the Black Magpies, and she gave me the following information:—The tame birds prefer sweet food, such as cake, but when the ground is frozen hard they will eat anything. Sometimes they go into the stable loft and catch mice in the hay. They are very fond of chickens while they are small, and these have to be kept shut up till they are feathered, after which the Magpies will not touch them. They prefer young Ducklings to anything, and it is almost impossible to keep them. As the wild Ducks breed in this locality, I expect many of the Ducklings furnish a meal for the Black Magpies and their young. Young Turkeys are also favourites. When a Magpie attacked a Turkey and her brood, the mother would give the alarm, the young ones would lie flat beside a stone or tuft of grass, and the old Turkey would go and fight the Magpie. In their wild state these Magpies eat a great many common red berries which grow amongst the rocks. When the young ones are in the nest the old birds seem to have a hard time hunting for them, and get very shabby and rusty-looking. Sometimes they alight on the roof of the porch with a load of grubs and beetles in their bills. They put their load down and have a feed of bread or cake themselves, then pick up their load and fly straight off to their nest. They do a lot of good killing the grass-grubs. On the marshes some miles back, flocks of these Magpies gather, all hunting grubs. Those coming round The Steppes homestead seem rather more kindly disposed to each other than most wild creatures, judging by their treatment of a one-legged Magpie in their company. This one is always given a larger share of the dainties than the others, and in no way have they ever molested it.—(MISS) J. A. FLETCHER. Boat Harbour, Tasmania, 16/9/17.

Queensland Notes.

Finches.—I have reared young Gouldian (*Poephila gouldiæ*), Black-throated (*P. cincta*), Plumhead (*Aidemosyne modesta*), and Banded (*Stictoptera bichenovii*) Finches in my aviary, and was most interested in the markings in the mouths of the young Gouldians, or Painters, as we call them. I thought they might be for the protection of the young when disturbed, opening their mouths wide and wagging their heads and showing all their spots, with their naked neck behind, in a fearsome manner, which gave me the impression that they were reptiles peering out of the entrance to the nest, as I never saw other young Finches do this when alarmed; they usually cower down and remain still. I have never noticed any signs of bright spots or colouring in the other young Finches reared in captivity. Many Finches build family nests to play building with by day and sleep in in cold weather. I always keep a supply of dry grass for them, and after every rainy day they have a building fit, but when they mean to nest for young ones each pair builds separately, and fiercely

resents another coming near or even looking at their "very own wee home." My son found a Jabiru's nest in a *Pandanus* palm early in the year. This is the third nest we have heard of in this locality. One of the others was in the top of a big mistletoe on a box tree.—MRS. ADAM BLACK. Pajingo, Charters Towers, Queensland.

* * *

Retirement of Dr. Hamlyn-Harris from the Queensland Museum.—According to the *Daily Mail* (Brisbane) recently (October), the members of the Queensland Museum staff met in the library to make a suitable presentation to Dr. R. Hamlyn-Harris, to mark his retirement from the directorship after seven years' service. Apologies were received from Dr. J. Shirley and Mr. A. B. Walkom. In asking the Director to accept a framed enlargement of himself, with the museum as a background, Mr. H. A. Longman said he would like briefly to refer to the valuable work which had been done under the direction of Dr. R. Hamlyn-Harris. The galleries had been reorganized, and both exhibited and reference specimens were now largely systematized. The Museum *Memoirs* published had won wide recognition for their scientific standing, and had resulted in enhancing the library of the institution through the accession of exchange material. The introduction of educational lectures, especially those to school students, had been a great progressive step. Dr. T. Harvey Johnston, hon. zoologist, in supporting the remarks of Mr. Longman, said it was to the credit of Dr. Hamlyn-Harris that the museum was to-day recognized as of genuine scientific value. Unfortunately, the director's health had been seriously affected, and he sincerely hoped, with all the members of the staff, that the complete change which Dr. Harris was about to make would result in a speedy recovery of his good health. They wished him every success in his enterprise on the land. Mr. B. Harrison, the veteran attendant, also spoke. In replying, Dr. Hamlyn-Harris said he was naturally self-conscious, as any man would be under similar circumstances. Of his work in the institution, all he could say was that he had served the museum and the State to the best of his ability. He realized the momentous step he was taking in severing his connection with scientific work. One of the main reasons was that he was making a bid to regain his health. He expressed the hope that the museum would maintain its position, and that every member of the staff would continue to render faithful service. He also paid a special compliment to the valuable assistance rendered to him by Mr. J. Douglas Ogilby, the well-known ichthyologist. Dr. R. Hamlyn-Harris leaves to-day for Stanthorpe, where he has secured interests on the land.

* * *

Sundry Notes.—I found a Black Duck's (*Anas superciliosa*) nest a few days ago, and the little ones were just emerging from the eggs, of which there were eight in the nest. The Condamine

River is not far away, but is only a series of shallow pools just now, so they will probably fall a prey to the foxes, which have unfortunately reached us. Until their arrival, three or four years ago, there were always two pairs of Bustards (*Eupodotis australis*) nesting in the paddock, but they never come near now, and in many of the large station paddocks in this locality scarcely a bird now is to be seen where we used to see dozens. Kangaroo rats (*Beltongia penicillata*) have completely disappeared. Opossums (*Phalangista vulpina*) are on the decrease; I find them frequently, when riding about, headless under the trees. The foxes have also taken to killing lambs in these parts, due probably to the scarcity of their natural food.

Two old friends of eight years' standing, in a pair of House-Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*), have commenced to get their nests in order, but birds appear to be very irregular in their nesting habits in these parts. I saw a Chestnut-breasted Finch (*Munia castaneithorax*) building last week.

In spite of two weeks of frosts, we still have the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) with us; he, however, is very silent, and appears to spend most of his time dodging other birds. The quiet and busy Caterpillar-eater (*Campephaga humeralis*) appeared in numbers about the beginning of the year, and cleared a small lucerne patch I had in the garden of green grubs; they stayed on for several weeks.

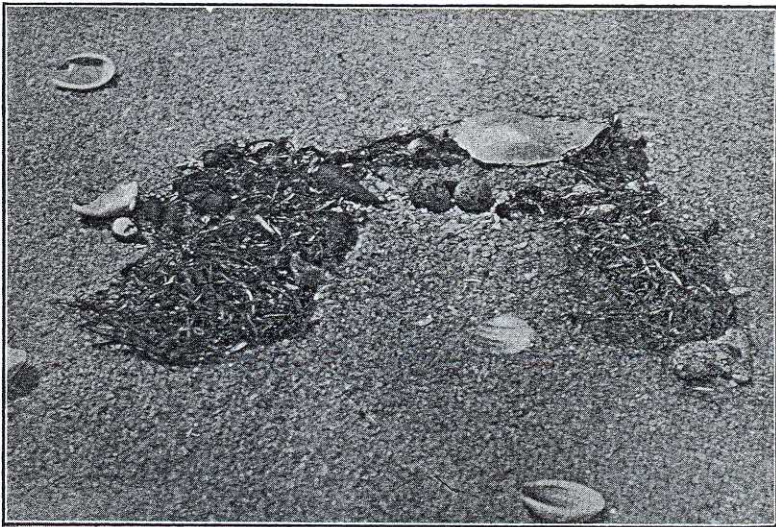
Regarding the fox, I do not think they would bother with a small Duckling; I really believe they would wait until they were a decent size before interfering with them. I notice here that, as the stream becomes shallow, the Ducklings about the "flapper" stage make for the long grass or any cover there may be on the banks, and are then, of course, an easy prey for the fox. A colony of Fairy Martins (*Petrochelidon ariel*) made their nest this year in a recess in the river-bank, and I kept a good look-out, expecting that when the eggs were laid the foxes would break them down, and, as I could trace the animals easily, I began to think that they were not going to molest the birds; however, about a week after the little ones were hatched I found one morning that every nest was broken down and nothing but feathers to be seen. This makes me think that these animals bide their time, and may therefore turn up their noses at a tiny ball of fluff in the shape of a young Duck. With the disappearance of the kangaroo rat and the scarcity of Bustards (*Eupodotis australis*), the monitor lizard (iguana) can be pressed on to the list. They may be a tough morsel, but apparently nothing comes amiss to the fox.

I once shot a Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*) with two small ones on her back in a lignum swamp, near the Kow Swamp, in the Terricks district, in Victoria. I spent my boyhood's days on a property we had on the Pyramid Creek, which was filled from the Kow Swamp, and, after travelling in New Guinea, Northern Territory, North Queensland, East, West, South, and North Africa, I have yet to find a place that abounded with wild-fowl as plentiful

as Kow Swamp. I have sometimes been out in a boat shooting, and, when the first shot was fired, the rising of the birds sounded like thunder, but that was about 20 years ago.—E. R. CALDWELL. "Gilgi," Pampas, Queensland, 3/6/17.

Camera Craft Notes.

Red-capped Dottrel.—It is interesting that the Red-capped Dottrel (*Ægialitis ruficapilla*) always nests, as far as my observation goes, on coarse sand, and just at high-water mark; occasionally a higher wave than usual wets the eggs, but, the sand being so coarse, at once sinks away and no drawback occurs—if it did the eggs would run the risk of being rolled away. I took the accompanying photograph in Tasmania on 23rd November last. It will be noticed how the bird has placed small pieces of white shell alongside the eggs, and the excellent site from a protective point



Nest of Red-capped Dottrel (*Ægialitis ruficapilla*).

PHOTO. BY W. H. D. LE SOUEF, C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U.

of view. Not far away was the nest of the Pied Oyster-catcher (*Hematopus longirostris*). This bird had made its nest (if nest it can be called) well above high-water mark and on fine sand. I notice that the Black Oyster-catcher (*H. fuliginosus*) usually nests further away from the sea, and on darker material—such as on patches of seaweed, &c.—than the lighter-coloured bird does. The photographs were taken on the same day, on the eastern coast of Tasmania.—W. H. D. LE SOUEF. Melbourne.