

Of course, the fact that caterpillars always occur in Bell-Birds' nests, and not in kindred nests, such as that of the Grey Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*), disposes of the suggestion that the birds are not responsible for their presence. Moreover, I have seen a male Bell-Bird carrying a hairy caterpillar both to and from a nest. Mr. Tryon's remarks on the compressed state of some of the specimens submitted lead one to wonder whether the bird squeezes the juices out of the soft body. If so, however, why are the remains not discarded? All points considered, it seems to me that we need much more definite evidence than has so far been adduced before we can accept the rather superficial theory that the Bell-Birds collect these caterpillars for food.

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### The Singing Honey-eater (*Ptilotis sonora*).

BY JOHN G. MANN, FRANKSTON (VIC.)

SOME remarks in Mr. F. C. Morse's "Nesting Notes from Moree" in last July number of *The Emu* relative to *Ptilotis sonora* lead me to think that possibly he, and others, may be interested to hear my experience of a pair of these birds, indicative of their intelligence and power of memory.

Surrounding my house near Frankston, Victoria, are a few acres of tea-tree and heath scrub, which I maintain as a bird sanctuary, and where I have succeeded in taming many members of several species of the numerous birds which frequent it, until they will come from the bush at call and take food from my hand.

Although there are always considerable numbers of Honey-eaters, such as White-eared, Lunulated, New Holland, Spinebills, and occasionally Wattle-Birds, I have never seen here but the one pair of Singing Honey-eaters. These were first noticed in the spring of 1916, when they built close to the house, and before long became sufficiently tame to come to the verandah for crumbs. By the middle of November, 1916, their two young ones were brought there also, and were fed by the mother bird with crumbs and sugar from my hand. When the young ones, however, were in full plumage, and able to care for themselves, the mother changed her tactics and began persistently to drive them away, until at length they left the neighbourhood for good. Then (in January, 1917) she built another nest in a *Leptospermum* tree adjoining that in which the first nest was made, and in due course reared another pair of young. All this time not a day passed but she came to me whenever I was near by, settled on my arm or hand, and even allowed me to stroke her. The male bird, though fairly tame, never showed quite the same confidence. When their second family was of mature growth it was driven out of bounds, like the first, and disappeared. During the second week in April, 1917, the old birds also disappeared, and nothing more was seen of them for months. On 14th September, how-

ever, as I was upon a ladder near the house, my old friend alighted on my hand and sought for sugar, as though it were but yesterday, instead of five months ago, since she left.

During that season she again reared two families, with almost exactly similar proceeding as in the previous year, and in April, 1918, again disappeared. This time, when September came round, I was on the look-out with much interest to see if she would again return, and sure enough, on the 13th (the year before it was the 14th), the pair arrived. Without hesitation they came at once to my hand. By Christmas their first young were launched upon the world, and as I now write (27th February) the second pair of young are nearly old enough to be driven forth. The old mother bird will now come in through the open window when I call and perch quietly on my thumb while I open the cupboard and dip a piece of bread in the honey for her—a delicacy she dearly enjoys.

It would be interesting to know whither these birds migrate for the five months each year, and also what becomes of their young, for they never return to my domain, and, though I have occasionally seen a few members of the species elsewhere on this Mornington Peninsula, they do not appear in this immediate locality.

As regards their vocal accomplishments, my experience differs somewhat from that of Mr. Morse. The rather high-pitched, musical little bar of several notes, from which I have assumed they derived their name, is given frequently during the whole time they are with me, and the "Preet, preet" only when they call each other. When they want to wean off the first family before their second adventure they use quite a different sound—between a hiss and a snarl, long drawn out—from which the young invariably flee.

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## The Nesting of Lyre-Birds.

BY H. V. EDWARDS.

It was remarked in *The Emu* for January that the Lyre-Bird, as evidenced at times by its selection of nesting-sites, does not exhibit any particular shyness. I also have found the nest of this bird on a low stump within 20 yards of a main road, and in full view of it. As regards the bird's general nesting habits, Mr. Gregory Mathews remarked some time ago (in the *Sydney Mail*, I think) that, since the increase of foxes, the Lyre-Bird had taken to nesting on tall stumps, cliffs, and in other elevated positions.

Long before the introduction of this animal I have found Lyre-Birds' nests about creeks on the outskirts of Tantawanglo Mountain (between the Monaro and Bega (N.S.W.) districts), and at Mittagong, about 70 miles south of Sydney, built on cliff ledges and stumps. The bird is naturally erratic in the choice of a site