

has trace of colour in the breast. The nest is cup-shaped, and usually woven of soft stringy-bark, like that of the Scarlet-breast; eggs three in number, and greyish-white in colour, spotted with brown.

It has been suggested by experienced bird-observers that my Robin was a *Petroica* nesting out of breeding plumage. This suggestion is negatived by the fact that the *Petroicas* do not nest in this peculiar manner, and that the nest of my bird was found several times about Mittagong, in open timbered country, and about creeks in the ranges. Further, the Robin to which I refer has a strikingly large eye, tinged, I think, with pale yellowish-white.

It was also suggested that the bird might be the Scrub-Robin (*Drymodes brunneipygius*), but it does not even faintly resemble this species, and the Scrub-Robin does not nest in this peculiar fashion, while the Tasmanian Dusky Robin does not come so far north, and, further, in breeding habits and other points does not answer to the description.

I fancied I afterwards saw this apparently unidentified Robin about creeks adjacent to the Snowy River, in southern Monaro, but am not sure. On first discovering a pair of these Robins, which, from their behaviour, evidently had a nest close at hand, I searched on trees, stumps, &c.—everywhere, in fact, but the right quarter. Eventually, the persistence of the birds in returning again and again to a heap of cow manure induced me to examine it, the nest being found built on the highest part of the pile.

A New Trait of the Goldfinch.

BY H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., DEVONPORT, TAS.

MR. Arthur Mattingley's pleasant note on the Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) in *The Emu*, vol. xviii., p. 209, was read with much interest. Many times have we watched this spruce little Honey-eater poised before a bunch of fuchsia or salvia blossom, dipping his slender, curved bill into each flower while remaining suspended on rapidly-vibrating wings. From this clever device the bird is often known, not inaptly, as the "Tasmanian Humming-Bird." But a few weeks ago I was much surprised to see that the introduced Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) was learning a similar trick for obtaining sustenance. Some white cornflowers (*Centaurea cyaneus*, var.) had protruded their heads through a picket fence, and a Goldfinch, in the absence of any support on which he could place his feet, was suspended on the wing while pulling with his beak at the florets in order to obtain the ovules at the base of these. This Finch is exceedingly fond of the cornflower seed, whether immature or ripe, and it is difficult to collect any from the plants when a flock of this handsome species is in

the neighbourhood. Any small mischief which is done in this way can be readily forgiven both on account of the beauty and grace of the bird and the good which it does in destroying large quantities of thistle and other weed seeds.

While watching our little friend feeding at the cornflower in the suspended manner just described, one could not help speculating as to whether a second species of "Humming-Bird" was in course of development in our island.

Stray Feathers.

Finches and Grass-Parrots.—It is interesting that Finches seem to prefer the hot drip from sun-heated pipes to reservoir water. They come in hundreds to the hot pipe, though the big water-hole is but 200 yards distant. It is evening as I write; about 500 Bee-eaters are all flying up and down around a tree close to the home, evidently going to roost in it. At the reservoir, in the dry weather, thousands of Warbling Grass-Parrots (Budgerigars of the trappers) watered in large flocks. The Black-tailed Native-Hen is sometimes around the water-holes. The season is dry, but patchy rains have fallen, which are not sufficient to warrant the birds going back to the rivers.—J. R. CHISHOLM. The Plains, Prairie Table-land, North Queensland.

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Cuckoo Seen with Egg.—Arthur P. Ingle, late of Rosedale, Victoria, who was a keen bird-observer and enthusiastic oologist, was killed while fighting with the Australian troops at Passchendaele, in Belgium, on 12th October, 1917. His collection of eggs, by the generosity of his father, passed into my possession. It contained a clutch consisting of two eggs of a Blue Wren-Warbler (*Malurus cyaneus*) and one egg of a Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalis*), which he had taken, and which is worthy of special notice because of the rare instances of authentic records of a Cuckoo being seen with an egg. The notes with this clutch contain the following particulars:—"I saw the Cuckoo take the Wren's egg away in her bill after having deposited her own in its place."—J. A. Ross. Malvern, 1/3/19.

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The Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*).—The variation in number of these fine birds in different seasons is very remarkable. During January, February, and March, and great part of April, 1917, they were seen in numbers, appearing at all altitudes—from 20 feet to the limit of visibility. Last summer (1918) not a bird came within my ken, although I was constantly on the look-out. Some were seen by a friend in April, apparently just about to leave for the North. This summer the same non-success