



Spur-winged Plover about to cover eggs.



Chicks of Spur-winged Plover, with one just emerging from egg;
remaining egg chipped.

Photos. by H. H. Innes, R.A.O.U.

The Spur-winged Plover.—During the spring of 1929 my attention was drawn to a pair of Spur-winged Plovers (*Lobibyx novæ-hollandiæ*). Both birds were repeatedly seen in or about a particular area of treeless country not far from my homestead near Bundaberg, Queensland. I felt certain that they were breeding, although some time elapsed before I actually located the nest. They were extremely wary and would take alarm long before I could approach closely enough to definitely fix the whereabouts of their home. Only after watching from cover a considerable distance away was the nest discovered on a slight rocky ridge. It contained four eggs, which were placed near a flat stone, and the only nesting material was a little trodden-down grass.

Desiring to secure a series of photographs I placed my camera near the nest and constructed a "hide" of sacks more than thirty yards away. In order that the birds would become accustomed to the intrusion I left the apparatus for some days, then attaching a long string to the shutter release I entered the "hide." The female, however, would not cover the eggs, though not because of the closeness of the camera; her suspicions were centered about the "hide," which she inspected from all angles. I waited for several hours, but nothing happened, and it was apparent that other tactics must be adopted before I would be successful. Thus I induced two companions to accompany me, and when I entered the "hide" they departed. The bird came readily enough then. Following each exposure I did not show myself till my colleagues returned.

On October 21, a week after I had discovered the nest, one egg was chipped. The following day I expected all the eggs to have hatched and the young to have gone, so that on investigation I was surprised to find only one more egg chipped. On the next day a third egg was also chipped, and there was no outward advancement in the appearance of the first two eggs. There was no apparent change on October 24, but on the next day the four young Plovers broke their eggs between 10 a.m. and 12 noon. As soon as they were dry the young birds left the nest together.

This interested me greatly, for one egg was chipped four days before hatching, whilst with the fourth egg the time was but a few hours. Had they hatched on different days it is probable that the parent birds would not have waited for them all. The point raised is this. Do the parents in any way control the hatching of the young? It does not seem that it can be attributable to any reasonable action on the part of the chicks. It would be interesting to know if any observer has noticed a similar happening.—H. H. INNES, R.A.O.U., Bundaberg, Queensland.