

spongy feel, was evidently the product of annual accumulations of their excrement, forming a tolerably thick covering to the rocks. Many of the birds appeared as if their breasts were stained with blood, which, on examination, was found to arise from a red coloring matter in the excrement on which they had been resting their breasts." On 28th January the magnificent volcano, Mt. Erebus, was sighted, and named after the ship; also the extinct Mt. Terror; progress south was here checked by a great ice-barrier, 150 feet and upwards in height, which was traced for 300 miles without any sign of a termination. Soundings were obtained within less than a mile of it, in 318 fathoms, on a bottom of green mud. The White Petrel seemed to have chosen this as its favorite haunt, with only an occasional raptorial Gull to intrude upon its icy domain. Whales were spouting in all directions, and many seals and Penguins were seen on the ice.

"On 7th April we anchored in the Derwent, after an absence of five months."

The *Tasmanian Journal*, from which the above observations were taken, is now rather scarce, only three volumes (1842-6-9) having been issued; these are full of most interesting papers by various naturalists and travellers. The 1842 volume contains Rev. J. T. Ewing's list of Tasmanian Birds—the first one compiled of our island avifauna—with remarks on some of the species. Ewing also reviewed Gould's *Birds of Australia*, which was then being published; in the 1846 *Journal* Rev. Wm. Colenso gives an account of his journey through the North Island of New Zealand, with remarks on the birds, insects, and plants encountered on the way.

**Roosting of Starlings.**—All are familiar with the gregarious habits of the introduced Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and have seen their flocks, often of some hundreds, wheeling in the air, at times becoming almost invisible as they turn in the sun's rays, then changing through silver to a dense black mass as they come into a more favourable light. At Beaconsfield, Vic., last spring, I was camped one night on a V-shaped lagoon about a mile and a half in circumference, but nowhere, except at the apex, more than say 150 feet across. There, however, the water spread over a large expanse and clumps of reeds grew in profusion. Some of these were growing around small tea-tree covered islets. Just at dusk a noise like a heavy downpour of rain coming from the centre of the lagoon induced me to creep to the margin of the pond and peer through the tea-tree across the water. It was nearly dark, but there could dimly be seen thousands of Starlings with hundreds more arriving every few seconds—evidently the whole population



**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater at nest.**

Photo by K. A. Hindwood, R.A.O.U.

of the district and adjoining areas—congregating on the foliage, and bearing it down, especially the reeds, by their weight. The bushes were absolutely black with birds, and when I shouted and clapped my hands they arose in a vast flock which blackened the sky, as do the incoming Mutton Birds (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) at evening. Never before had I seen so many of this ubiquitous species gathered together. Several times I succeeded in putting them up, but after that they refused to move when I shouted. By this time it was quite dark and I made up my mind to see them leave in their thousands next morning. The birds were astir earlier than I was, however, and not one remained when I went to the water's edge next day. Evidently the centre of the lagoon afforded a perfectly safe roosting place that the hosts of Starlings had come to know well.—C. E. BRYANT, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.

**The Tawny-crowned Honeyeater.**—Among the several species of *Meliphagidæ* inhabiting the extensive heaths near Sydney, the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (*Gliciphila melanops*) is undoubtedly the most captivating. Long before dawn on a Spring morning I have strolled along a bush track and listened, entranced, to the tinkling notes of many of these birds, and not a songster could I see in the dim light. Standing awhile to enjoy the fantasy, it seemed that their voices were wistful, even melancholy, and lacking the joyfulness so evident during the sunlit hours.

In early Spring they congregate in flocks of a dozen or more, and it is an experience rarely to be surpassed to hear them singing, not in unison, but haphazardly, their rich, almost bell-like, notes reminding of a small boy playfully toying with a flute. A peculiarity of the species is its habit of flying a hundred feet or so in the air; with beating wings it will utter a few joyful notes and then descend in a fluttering manner. Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters nest in open, grassy heathlands, covered with a scattered and stunted vegetation, and generally build within a few inches of the ground. An average nest measures, externally, about four inches across; the actual nesting cavity is two inches in diameter and of a like depth. The cup-shaped structure is composed of strips of old bark, blades of old grass and finer grass stalks, giving even a new nest an appearance of age. Often it is lined with a white downy substance covering the seed cases of a shrub common on the heath, *Petrophila pulchella*. The two eggs are a lustreless white, blotched with pink or darker spots mostly towards the larger end. An immature bird differs somewhat from the adult inasmuch as it has a striped crown, throat and breast, otherwise it is soberly coloured in grey.—K. A. HINDWOOD, R.A.O.U., Willoughby, N.S.W.