

nis), which remain in two small sections or portions of the south-eastern and the south-western littoral. The long, strongly graduated tails, the five stout bristles on each side of the gape, the peculiar siliceous texture of plumage generally, together with nesting habits and markings of eggs bear very strong resemblances to one another.

Interior forms have a zoological interest of their own if only because of the vast extent of the region they inhabit and the remarkable climatic conditions in which they manage to persist. Economically a study of interior and desert forms seems desirable, because when correctly classified and grouped they will be used as natural indicators of the nature of the country they inhabit.

Nesting Grey Duck.—Whilst riding across a recently-burned patch of ground about a third of a mile distant from the Break o' Day River, in company with my son, a Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) fluttered up from beneath a badly scorched bush situated about 4 feet from the foot of a dead gum, and flew away towards the river. A moment's search from the saddle revealed her nest, containing nine eggs, three of which showed unmistakable signs of having been badly scorched by the fire which had not long previously passed right over the nest. The down surrounding the eggs did not appear to have been very much singed, although the flames from the burning bush under which the nest was situated must have passed quite close, within a few inches of it. The fire had occurred about four days prior to the discovery of the nest. Passing by the next day I could plainly discern from a distance of about 12 yards the "supercilious" markings of the sitting bird's head, and she was flushed again by my shepherd's boys on October 4, 1920.

The question in this case seems to be, to me at any rate, was the bird on her eggs as the fire approached the nest, and, if so, just how long did she withstand the flames before she left? The nest was surrounded by dry grass, bark and twigs from the trees hard by, and the fire consumed all this surface material right round the nest. How was it that the down surrounding the eggs was not burned, too? It looks like wonderful devotion to her duty on the part of that duck.

A later visit to the spot, on October 7, showed the Duck still sitting. She allowed me to approach within 12 yards of the nest, then took flight. An attempt was made to photograph the nest whilst the bird flew round in circles. On our leaving the site as soon as possible, the bird was seen to alight amongst the bracken some distance from the nest. The eggs were not chipped, but from the bird's behaviour, incubation of some of the eggs at least seemed to be imminent. She would no doubt creep back to the nest after my departure.

On October 13 I visited the site on horseback. The duck was sitting very close, allowing approach to within twelve yards of the nest. I did not stop my horse, but, riding in a circle, was able to observe clearly the brooding bird on the nest with its head extended low over the edge of the down surrounding the eggs. My shepherd's boys passing the nest at frequent intervals, declare that there are two different birds sitting on this nest, one having "more white on it than the other." This would seem to indicate that the male is assisting in the brooding.

On October 22 it was ascertained that 5 out of the 10 eggs had proved fertile—the broken shells of that number being observed in the nest, with the remaining 5 eggs left. It is quite likely that the eggs which had been hatched were laid after the fire passed over the nest, but from the appearance of the clutch when first found it appeared that it had been incubated for some time, and again sufficient time had hardly elapsed for this surmise to be correct, although the nest was first discovered on September 24. From that date to October 22 the time elapsed is just four weeks.—ROBT. LEGGE, Cullenswood, Tasmania.

Flame Robin's Nesting Site.—Robins often choose strange nesting sites, an instance of this habit having come under my notice here at Cullenswood recently (14/10/30). Close to the orchard and kitchen-garden there is a small square shed in which are kept tools, fertilizers, etc. It is kept locked when not in use, but a pair of Flame Robins (*Petroica phœnicea*) found a way to enter it by a vacant pane in the 4-light window-sash facing the east. Hanging from one of the rafters there is an old landing net which has been used for drying and storing "shallots," of which there are the remains of some old bulbs filling the purse of the net. The Robins built their nest on top of the dried bulbs, and in spite of the daily usage of the shed by the gardener, have brought out three young birds. I did not know of the existence of the net until the date mentioned above, when the man pointed it out to me. My son took a photograph, which, owing to the dark interior and the position of the nest-site, was not an easy matter. Whilst the camera was being placed in position for the exposure, the female watched the proceedings from the window, and after the camera-stand, a step-ladder, was removed, she returned to the nest, and remained sitting whilst I went in and out of the shed, passing within a foot of her repeatedly.—ROBT. W. LEGGE, R.A.O.U., Cullenswood, Tasmania.