

Notes on Nesting in Captivity of the Adelaide Rosella

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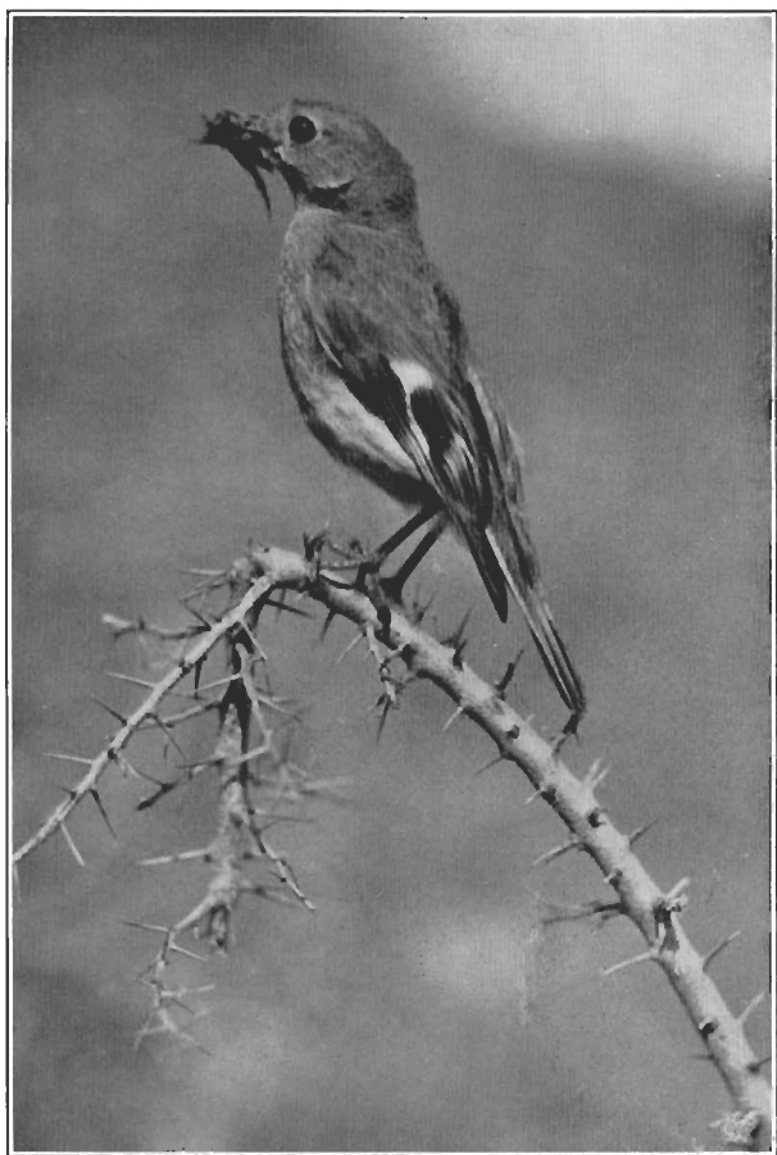
In 1929 I mated a Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) male with an Adelaide Rosella (*P. adalaidæ*) and took the following notes:—

10/10/'29.—Nest contained 6 eggs. Hen bird has spent much time on nest in daytime but roosted on perch at night. 13/10/'29.—She stayed in nest to-night for first time. 31/10/'29.—Nest contained 1 young one and 7 eggs. 1/11/'29.—3 young ones and 5 eggs. 8/11/'29.—Five young ones in nest. The hen bird alone has fed young ones until to-day, having consistently refused to allow male bird into nest from time she commenced sitting. To-day male bird fed young ones in nest for first time, and to-night hen bird roosted on perch first time since sitting. 1/12/'29.—First young one out of nest for first time to-day. 4/12/'29.—The fifth and last young one left nest for first time.

After the male bird fed young ones for first time the hen bird was rarely seen to feed one, practically the whole of the feeding being left to the male. He had fed female frequently before and during laying and sitting period, and when she was feeding young. Nearly every morning during sitting period, not long after daylight, the hen bird rushed from the nest with loud calls, flew down, and ran quickly to and fro along the netting looking for a place to get out, with the evident intention of going for a fast fly. It was very noticeable because she was an exceptionally quiet bird, hand-reared from the time she was nearly full-fledged.

Before the young ones left the nest the hen bird was noticed scratching in the nest, so I gave her another nesting box. 5/12/'29.—One egg in new nest probably laid to-day, possibly yesterday. 7/12/'29.—2 eggs in nest. 8/12/'29.—Hen bird stayed in nest to-night for first time. 10/12/'29.—3 eggs. 12/12/'29.—4 eggs. 19/12/'29.—5 eggs. 26/12/'29.—5 eggs. 28/12/'29.—2 young ones and 3 eggs. 30/12/'29.—2 young ones and 3 eggs. 1/1/'30.—3 young ones and 2 eggs. 11/1/'30.—Hen bird, which alone had fed young ones, appeared to be neglecting them. Nest examined, and it contained 1 dead one and 2 evidently starving, one of them very weak. An attempt to hand-rear them failed.

The male bird had been looking much out of sorts for two or three days, and evidently neglected to take over the feeding, and it appears that the mother bird considered her part of the contract completed and refused to carry on further. It seems to me that the Adelaide Rosella, and also the Eastern Rosella, usually lay every second day or thereabouts, and commence sitting closely when about half or two-thirds of



Flame Robin.

Photo. by A. J. Elliott, R.A.O.U., and A. O. Elliott.

the clutch has been laid, which would account for the very noticeable differences in stages of development usually found among their young ones in the nest.

An Eastern Rosella (*P. eximius*) this year laid as follows:—11/9/'30, 13/9/'30, 16/9/'30, 18/9/'30, and 21/9/'30. She stayed in the nest for the first night, 21/9/'30, and by midday, 25/9/'30, had laid 2 more eggs, having taken 14 days to lay the clutch.

The Flame Robin.—It is interesting to note, that in some localities on the south Coast of New South Wales, that beautiful little bird, the Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*), is rapidly increasing in numbers. It was September 18, 1927, that we found the first nest of the species which we had seen. It was placed in a cavity in a bank facing the south, and both birds were alike in plumage, showing that they were a young pair and this probably was their first attempt at reproducing their kind. The species has increased steadily in numbers since then, until now they are quite common birds here. At least nine pairs nested in our "territory" (a space of about 500 acres on which we particularly carry out observations), during the recent nesting season, and we are almost sure that there were more than that. From our observations the favourite nesting sites are cavities in banks, and, to a lesser degree, in cavities in stones. A few nests are built on the ground, sheltered by a projecting stone, a few in clefts and scars (generally caused by fire), in trees and stumps and still others on top of tree-ferns, although we found only one in either of the last two positions last season (1930). The highest nest which we have seen was placed about 20 feet from the ground. We have found them facing in every direction, although in only a very few instances have we found them open to the north.

Some pairs of Robins rear two broods annually, sometimes using the same nest twice, and at other times building a new one for the second brood. The usual clutch of eggs is three, and about here the parents generally seem to get all their young into the outside world safely. The young feather very quickly. The female pictured is one of a pair which commenced taking life seriously about three years ago. The male was then indistinguishable from the female, although he has now had the flame-coloured breast for a couple of years. He is not yet, however, a well-marked bird when compared with some specimens of his kind. Every nest of this particular pair has been built in a cavity in a bank; not the same one every time, of course. During the past season we found them building on August 24, 1930, and on October 3 we successfully photographed the female.