

## Photographing the Spotted Nightjar

By A. H. MATTINGLEY, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.

Although widely distributed throughout Australia, the Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*), a nocturnal Owl-like bird, has only been seen by me on rare occasions. Other ornithologists have stated that they either have not met with it at all or have seen it but rarely; hence the obtaining of its photograph was an achievement to be regarded as important.

During the recent Camp-out of the members of the R.A.O.U. in the Mallee National Park, at Wyperfeld, Victoria, I came in contact with the bird again through the instrumentality of Mr. J. A. Ross, who flushed the parent birds from the debris of fallen bark, twigs and leaves at the base of a mallee eucalypt. Closer examination of the vacated site disclosed a newly-hatched rusty-brown chick, and adjacent to it the empty egg-shell, the bird laying but one egg. Apparently the Nightjar has few enemies, since the number of eggs a bird lays is usually in proportion to the degree of danger experienced by the egg or young—the more danger the more eggs laid.

Since it was understood that the brooding bird had not yet been photographed, I was deputed to take its picture *in situ*. For photographic purposes, the situation was poorly lighted, since it was overshadowed by the vegetation of mallee eucalypts and other trees, and the clouded sky and lateness of the day necessitated an exposure of not less than one-fifth of a second. The camera was set up and focussed on the recumbent chick, and then screened with leaves. A "hide" was also made some distance from the camera.

It was observed that both birds when originally disturbed flew noiselessly away, and alighted on the ground some distance off. After waiting about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours, one of the adult birds, prompted by its parental duties, flew noiselessly over the top of the mallee eucalypt under the canopy of which the chick reclined.

The examination by the parent bird of the vicinity of the hidden camera apparently did not dispel its fear of harm befalling it if it attempted to brood on its chick, so it flew onwards and over the hide in which I was concealed, after which it flew away a considerable distance, and alighted on the ground near its mate. No noise was made by the bird at any time.

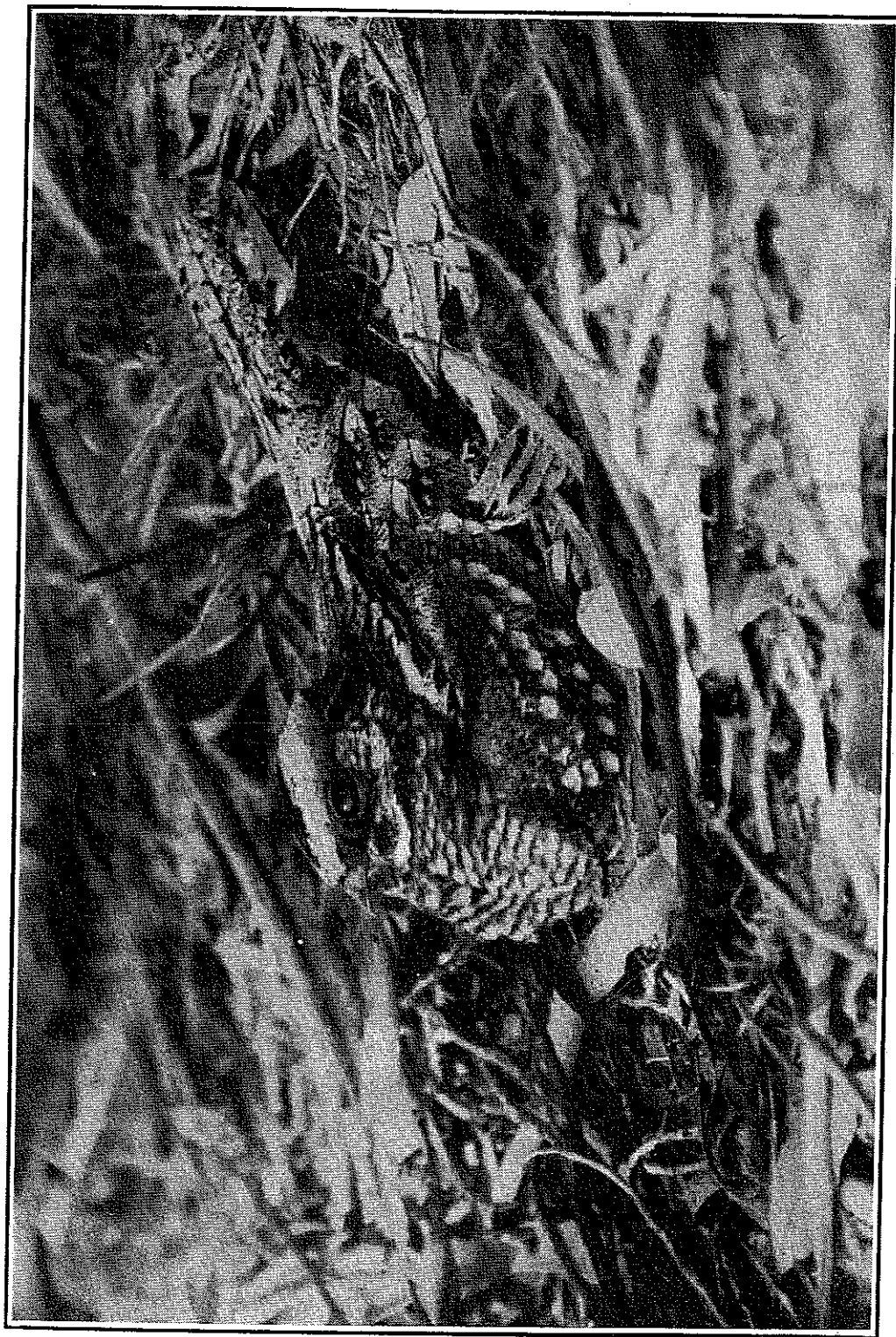
After another period of about three-quarters of an hour had elapsed, one of the birds flew again over the chick, and was about to alight, but its nerve failed it again, and it flew back to its mate. A further wait of about another three-quarters of an hour brought one of the parent birds

into the air again, when, after viewing the area once more, it alighted on the ground about 15 yards away from the chick, and started to waddle on its short legs and talons towards its offspring. Owing to its body being set close to the ground, due to its short legs, and owing to what appeared to be a cautious desire to avoid making the brittle fallen bark, twigs and leaves emit a noise that would attract attention, the waddling bird carefully wriggled in a lizard-like motion around every obstacle until it reached its fledgling.

Observations made earlier indicated that after the young had emerged from the shell the parent birds had transported the chick about two yards from it, no doubt to remove it from the vicinity of the tell-tale empty and easily-discernible eggshell. For photographic purposes, the eggshell was misguidedly placed alongside the chick, and when the parent bird wriggled up to its young it promptly raked the chick away from the broken eggshell with its wing, since the jagged edges of the broken eggshell would have irritated it if it had brooded upon it. It then nestled upon the chick. I was dubious as to whether the action of the parent in clearing the chick from the proximity of the broken eggshell had placed it out of focus, but I took the chance of photographic failure, and made a snap. The bird, as will be seen by the illustration, was still in focus. This was the only photo. taken, and although I allowed the parent bird to brood over the chick for a considerable time to give it confidence and the chick warmth, it did not return after it was again disturbed, during the next half-hour, so I then left it in undisputed possession of its offspring.

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**Some Migrants Near Brisbane.**—These notes were taken recently ten miles south of Brisbane. The Rose Robin (*Petroica rosea*) was last seen by me on August 26, four days earlier than last year. The Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula*) appeared on September 13, the male only, and two days later, in another place, both male and female. They nest not far from the house. On September 13 I saw the first Black-faced Flycatcher (*Monarcha melanopsis*) I have seen—a male. I think it must have been passing south, as I have not seen it here before. The song is something like that of the Leaden Flycatcher in tone, but the two notes slur upwards, and then the same two notes slur downwards; it has also the harsh, grating note peculiar to the other Flycatchers I know. The Little Friar-bird (*Philemon citreogularis*) appears some time during the first half of September usually, but has not come yet—September 15. The Varied Triller (*Lalage leucomela*) first appeared on July 31, the male only. The Bronze Cuckoo (*Lamprocoecyx*) came on August 16.—(MRS.) E. COMRIE-SMITH, R.A.O.U., Brisbane.



Spotted Nightjar brooding on young bird—evacuated eggshell alongside.  
Photo. by A. H. Mattingley, R.A.O.U.