

is the instinct that on some occasions the birds will alight on a person and endeavour to secure nesting material long after the nest has been completed. Thus one of the birds flew on to my head for material when the nest contained heavily-incubated eggs. Another bird whose nest contained eggs flew on to my head and secured some loose lining material which I had placed thereon. She flew to a tree but dropped the lining after toying with it for a time in her bill. The sight of desirable nesting material was sufficient to arouse in the bird an instinctive desire to acquire it although she undoubtedly had no use for it.

Some Birds of the Heath Country

By A. J. ELLIOTT, R.A.O.U., Cambewarra, N.S.W.

While holidaying for a week in Sydney during August, 1932, I was enabled, owing to the kindness of Mr. Norman Chaffer, R.A.O.U., to make three very enjoyable and profitable trips into the heath-lands in the vicinity of Middle Harbour, north of Sydney. Although heath of a sort exists within fairly easy reach of me at any time, none which I have yet explored has anything like the attraction for the heath-loving Honeyeaters as has that tract which I visited while in Sydney. On the moderately-flat top of that portion of the Cambewarra Range, known locally as the "Barren Mountain," the vegetation is composed of stunted timber and heath, but, unfortunately, few flowering shrubs attractive to Honeyeaters are present, with the result that Spinebills (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) and wandering bands of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga chrysops*) are about the only members of the *Meliphagidæ* to be noticed there. Then, between Cambewarra and the Shoalhaven River at Nowra there exists a mixture of stunted forest and heath, where, in certain places, a few of the heath-frequenting Honeyeaters are often to be found. Therefore, visiting the typical heath-lands of Sydney had many attractions for me.

It is generally well known that the birds inhabiting this type of heath are, almost without exception, early breeders, and that there is very little nesting after September. Nesting commences usually in June and July, or even earlier with some species. Consequently the heath is a favourable hunting-ground of bird observers—especially those who practise photography—during those months before the birds inhabiting other types of country have begun to nest.

While I was in Sydney, Mr. Chaffer had under observation a number of nests. One of a Lyrebird (*Menura novæ-hollandiæ*) held a special attraction for him, and while I

was there he was making "movie" pictures of the female. The nest was situated on a moderately-steep side of a gully near Middle Harbour, and, although not actually in the heath, it was close enough to it to induce me to mention it here. When I saw it the young bird which it sheltered was well-grown and about ready to leave the nest. When lifted from the nest and placed a few feet away from it, the young would walk calmly back into its home. It was unusually quiet, and no amount of ordinary handling would induce it to utter its loud call. Its mother was equally trustful, and it was indeed pleasing to see a wild Lyrebird scratching for food while humans sat a few feet away, and unconcernedly attending to the requirements of its young while a movie-camera was operated nearby.

The heath-loving Honeyeaters interested me to a great degree. A female of the White-eared species (*Meliphaga leucotis*) was putting the finishing touches to a nest in a clump of heath growing on a hillside, and in her search for lining material she alighted on the heads of various members of our party, after we had removed our hats.* Three days later, on my last visit to the locality, the bird was sitting on two eggs, and was very trustful, although the eggs were decidedly fresh. I photographed her on the nest, as did Mr. Chaffer. At a later date Mr. Chaffer also made some movie-pictures of this bird, which, he said, was among the most trustful subjects he had ever met. The male, of which we did not see very much, was noticeably larger than its mate. I was also shown a couple of other nests of this species.

Two nests of the White-cheeked Honeyeater (*Meliornis niger*) were shown to me. One contained eggs and the other young ready to leave. These latter were captured and tethered close to our cameras. The adults were not very brave, and I was beginning to give up hope of securing their portraits when I decided to try different methods, and induced the young to squeak. The adults immediately became very agitated, and one flew to the twig on which my camera was focussed. I made the exposure with a short cable-release with one hand while holding the young with the other. Its tireless activity (a characteristic of the Honeyeater family) and its conspicuous colouring makes this species an attractive bird and one of the showiest of the Honeyeaters of south-eastern Australia.

A common bird was the Yellow-winged Honeyeater, or, as it is perhaps more often called, the White-bearded or New Holland Honeyeater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*). It is very similar in appearance to the White-cheeked species but the conspicuous white cheek-patch from which the latter takes its name makes it the more attractive bird of the two.

*See article by N. Chaffer, elsewhere in this part.—Ed.



White-cheeked Honeyeater.

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

Two birds, at the time new to me, were the Tawny-crowned (*Gliciphila melanops*) and Brown-headed Honey-eaters (*Melithreptus brevirostris*). A nest containing eggs of the former species was discovered by Mr. Chaffer. It was lined with white material gathered from the seed-cases of a shrub. On the other hand, the nests I saw of the White-cheeked species were lined with soft, reddish-brown material gathered from the dead flowering spikes of certain banksias. That one species lined its nests with reddish-brown material and the other with somewhat similar unusual material, but white in colour, struck me as being rather peculiar. I have never seen the "Tawny-crown" in the vicinity of Cambewarra. A few days after my return from Sydney, however, I saw a solitary Brown-headed Honeyeater about a mile north-west of Nowra, and since then I have seen a pair of these birds in the same vicinity, accompanied by two young which had been out of their nest for some time. The young were much duller in colour than their parents, especially about the head. This is not really a bird of the heath but prefers to inhabit chiefly stunted or moderately-light forest.

Other birds noticed in the heath were the shy Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*), and the equally elusive Heath-Wren, or Chestnut-tailed Ground-Wren (*Hylacola pyrrhopygia*). While walking through the heath I flushed a bird from a spot a few feet in front of me, and a search revealed a nest of the Heath-Wren. It was the first nest of the species which I had seen and contained young. It was placed among grass and heath and was five or six inches from the ground. This species appears to be quite common on portions of the "Barren Mountain" (Cambewarra Range). The Emu-Wren is also common in certain localities on the same Range.

Reference was made on February 13, 1933, by a visitor to the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, to an albino female Lyrebird seen by him whilst on survey work near Mt. Whitelaw, Baw Baw Ranges, Victoria. A. J. Campbell records in *Nests and Eggs*, p. 523, a report by R. C. Chandler of twice seeing an albino cock Lyrebird in the Bass River district, Victoria. That bird had the tail of the usual colour, the legs, eyes and bill black, and the remainder of the plumage white.

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Nest of Chestnut-tailed Ground-Wren or Heath-Wren.

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