

Gymnorhina tibicen. Black-backed Magpie.—A very rare bird in this part, in fact, residents told me that they had not seen one bird when they first went out there. They claim that the Magpies followed them. On our 1931 trip only two were at Echo Hill. In June of this year two were seen at Swamp Well, two at Upsan Downs Well and two at Ernabella. All appeared paired off.

Notes on the Large-tailed Nightjar

By H. GREENSILL BARNARD, Brisbane, Queensland.

In *The Emu*, Vol. xxxiii, page 219, Mr. A. J. Marshall, in writing of the Large-tailed Nightjar (*Caprimulgus macrurus*) states that there is practically no life-history of this member of the Nightjar group. I was always under the impression this particular bird was one of the best-known of the family. In 1889 I first met with the species in the Cairns district, where it was then called the Carpenter-bird. Again in 1896, on Cape York, I frequently watched the bird from my camp. On moonlight evenings a single bird came night after night and settled in an exposed place on a projecting bough. It would arrive just after dusk and was still there when I turned in about 9 p.m. Almost as soon as the bird alighted on the bough it would start the note, "Chop, chop, chop"—about one "chop" to the second. If an insect flew by the bird darted after it, and again returned to the perch, where the "Chop, chop" was resumed. This was kept up the whole evening, the only breaks being when darting after food.

From the beginning of August to the end of January the birds call the whole time. During February the note is only heard at intervals, and from then until August the note is seldom heard.

In the Rockingham Bay district, Cardwell, I found these birds breeding around the edges of tea-tree swamps, where the grass was short. I also found them breeding right away from swamps, on very barren country. The two eggs were laid on the bare ground without any pretence of a nest.

The breeding months are from October to January.

On the Murray River, Cardwell, on several occasions at dusk, I saw one of the birds fly on to a low, horizontal bough where it was joined by its mate. One of the birds would then utter a low crooning note, after which the pair would fly away. The young at first are covered with reddish down and are extremely hard to discover. As the feathers appear a mottled appearance is assumed, although some of the down is retained until the bird is almost able to fly. When disturbed from the young, the parent birds will circle around, alighting on a low limb or a log, drooping the wings and frequently opening wide the mouth and uttering a note like the croak of a frog.

Mr. Marshall refers to the birds uttering other notes, but as both the other Nightjars, the Spotted and the White-throated species, occur in the same country as the Large-tailed, the notes are probably referable to them.

In June of 1928, when on a trip to Cape York, I disturbed a pair of each of these three species from a patch of sandy ground, less than three acres in extent, and within six miles of the extreme northern-most point of the Cape.

The bird is definitely not a migrant, as I have seen them every month of the year in Northern Queensland.

The Nightjar is not alone in being silent during the non-breeding months. Many other night birds as well as day ones, are practically silent when not breeding.

It is practically impossible to get from the white residents of a locality a true version of what night-bird makes a call. Years ago many white people, as well as blacks, in Central Queensland, considered the loud boom of the Little Quail (*Turnix velox*) as the call of the brown snake, and it was very hard to convince them otherwise.

Observations on the Habits of the Spine-tailed Log-runner

By ELLIS McNAMARA, Cordeaux River, N.S.W.

Communicated by K. A. Hindwood, Willoughby, N.S.W.

The following interesting communication on the habits of the Spine-tailed Log-runner (*Orthonyx temminckii*) in the Cordeaux River District, which is a few miles west of Mount Kembla, New South Wales, the type locality of the species, was recently sent to me (K. A. Hindwood) by Mr. Ellis McNamara. The previously-recorded nesting period for the Log-runner was from March to October, and Mr. McNamara's observations increase that by several months, that is from October to January. His detailed notes on the "concert" performances of the birds and those on nest-building are particularly interesting.

"Each pair of birds has a definite territory from which they seldom venture, except when taking part in one of their 'concerts.' During the spring they are usually met with in pairs, and, in the autumn and early winter, in family parties of from three to six birds consisting of the two parents and their young.

"The 'concerts' occur quite frequently; several birds, generally an equal number of males and females, take part. Each bird perches on a log, or vine, or stone, a foot or two above the ground. The performers face one another—with heads held high, bills open, drooping wings, and outspread tails they utter their loud calls. Presently some of