

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

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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

the birds will commence to chase one another about among the leaves; they then appear to be very excited and utter queer chattering notes. One or two birds will remain on the perches, supplying music, although sometimes all join in the chase. They soon return and repeat the performance and so on until the end of the 'concert,' which usually lasts about fifteen minutes. One can approach within a few feet of the birds during these 'concerts' without disturbing them. The females call just as much as do the males.

"One is at first inclined to accept the performances as courting ceremonies but courtship is not the only influence, perhaps not even the main one, for the 'concerts' take place throughout the year, although they are more frequent in early spring. They occur mostly early in the morning. I have noticed two pairs of nesting birds indulge in a 'concert'; obviously in that, and in many similar cases of the kind that I have witnessed, the birds were not courting.

"I have found nests in every month from June to January. While many nests are under construction late in June I have not known eggs to be laid before mid-July. July and August are the main breeding months, but nests containing eggs are not uncommon during September, October, and November, and to a lesser extent in December.

"The nest, which is roughly globular, is composed of sticks, leaves, moss and decayed wood and lined with skeleton leaves, very fine rootlets, and the soft fibrous material which grows on the 'cabbage tree' palms where the leaves join the trunk. The framework of sticks on the two sides and back is first placed in position. When this portion is completed it reminds one somewhat of a Bower-bird's bower. The side walls curve in slightly at the top and slope back from the bottom at an angle of roughly 60 degrees. A lining of decayed wood is then placed in the bottom of the nest and extends usually about half way up the sides and back and up to the entrance at the front. The doorstep is then partly built and added to from time to time as the building progresses. A coat of green moss, interspersed with skeleton leaves is then placed all around the inside and made to form the roof at the top. The sides, back and top are then coated on the outside with dead leaves. The 'pagoda' of moss, which extends over the front of the nest above the doorstep is next placed in position, the bird commencing at the top centre and working downwards. Most of this moss is placed in position from the inside. The bird also reinforces the inside of the mossy dome with skeleton leaves. The bottom of the nest is then thickly lined inside with skeleton leaves and very fine root fibres. On top of this and interwoven among these materials is a coating of the fibrous material from the cabbage trees. This latter material, when interwoven with

the skeleton leaves and root fibres, has the appearance of fur, and is very soft and cosy. The doorstep, which varies in length from roughly three inches to about a foot, is composed of sticks and leaves matted together with moss and decayed wood. It is often coated with dirt from the birds' feet after it has been in use for some time. The doorstep usually slopes slightly towards the ground from the nesting chamber, but in occasional instances I have seen the doorstep sloping slightly upwards. In one instance the bird had to jump about eighteen inches into the nest every time she returned to it.

"The mossy dome varies considerably in size with different nests. Those built in more or less open situations usually have small and inconspicuous domes, and a greater quantity of dead leaves is used to cover the nest. Those built among green ferns and moss-covered rocks always have large and conspicuous domes of bright green moss. Frequently the nests with the smallest doorsteps have the largest domes.

"The task of nest-building generally covers a period of a month, and even longer in nests built early in the season. Later in the season the nests are run together much more quickly and often are smaller and less elaborate structures than the early nests.

"Much of the building material used is obtained within a dozen yards of the nest, although the bird frequently travels 30 yards or more for material. She always travels quickly to the nest and jumps straight in without pausing to look around as most other birds do. Most of the work of nest building is performed during the morning up till about 10 o'clock, little material being added during the remainder of the day. The female does all the work of nest-building, brooding the eggs, and rearing the young till they leave the nest.

"The eggs take about three weeks to hatch. I have known the bird to commence to brood on the one egg before the second was laid, but usually incubation does not commence until after the second egg is laid.

"The male seldom comes to the immediate vicinity of the nest during the brooding period. The female slips quietly off the nest, goes a short distance, and commences to call. The male immediately answers, and the birds travel rapidly towards each other, calling as they do so, till they meet, when they immediately begin to scratch among the leaves. The male passes all the food he obtains to his mate. Sometimes the male may call first, but the procedure described above is the usual one and has helped me to find many nests with little difficulty. A short search where the calls commence nearly always reveals the nest. The favourite nesting site is on the gently sloping bank of a creek or gully,

but nests are also built on rocks, in a mass of vines, a blackberry bush, or a clump of ferns about a foot from the ground.

"The female usually returns to the nest within half an hour of leaving it. She often takes lining material to the nest during the incubation period, and sometimes after the young have hatched. The male always utters three or four low, running notes as she leaves him to go to the nest.

"It is not uncommon to come across a nest with the lining pulled out, and the broken egg-shells lying nearby. I have never been able to ascertain what it is that robs nests in this manner, but I have not known it to happen in a nest containing young. In one case I noted that only one egg had been broken and the other, which was not even cracked, was lying on the ground about a yard in front of the nest.

"The young hardly ever utter a sound when being fed. The female pauses momentarily when on the doorstep and utters queer little low calls when returning with food and the young stretch their necks out for the food but make no sound. They are ready to leave the nest when about eighteen days old.

Both parents feed the young after they leave the nest. The fledglings utter an incessant cheeping sound as they follow their busy parents about. In the case of one pair that I was able to observe regularly, the parents took one of the offspring each and worked some distance from each other; they came together to roost at nights but separated again in the morning. This went on until the young were able to scratch among the leaves for themselves. The young are much more shy than their parents and utter a frightened, harsh 'squark' and dash off if one approaches too closely.

"The young take about six months to obtain the adult plumage. In one family party that I often watched some of the young were at least six months old and had assumed the adult plumage. They still uttered the incessant cheeping sound and were occasionally fed by their parents.

"The small, roughly-circular clearings the birds make while scratching among the leaves are a feature of the areas they inhabit."

The Magpie is one of the birds enjoying the protection that sentiment affords, and is not often ruthlessly slaughtered. For destroying fourteen Magpies at Werribee, Victoria, one James Dalgarno, was fined £2 and 5/- for each bird, in addition to having his gun confiscated. Dalgarno had trapped some of the birds in rabbit traps. The heavier the fine that can be imposed on men of this nature the better. The Fisheries and Game Department conducted the prosecution.