

especially the latter, contained, in his opinion, "the most wonderful bird fauna in the world." References to birds of British Guiana, the Barbadoes, St. Lucia and St. Vincent were most interesting. The address concluded with an account of birds in Venezuela—Parrots, Humming-birds, Tinamous, Sun-Bittern and Hoatzin.

A vote of thanks was acclaimed to Sir Charles for his address.

## Stray Feathers

### A Bird Calendar of the Brisbane District.—

1937.—January 31: A few Bee-eaters are heard each day passing over.

February 3: Motored to Lake Clarendon, a water sanctuary recently enclosed by public subscription. Lake completely dry; only birds visible a few Straw-necked Ibis and Spur-winged Plover. February 8: Motored to Lake Manchester. Water 19 feet below normal level. Bird life very scarce. Heard that men with permits had recently shot over sanctuary. A few Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*) still there. February 13: At Enoggera Reservoir, Black and other Cormorants and "Snake-bird" (*Anhinga novæ-hollandiæ*) on jetty. A few Jacanas and Black-throated Grebes and plenty of Coots, one White-faced Heron, one "Red-bill" (*Porphyrio melanotus*), and twenty brace of Grey Duck on water. Birds very shy. February 14: A number of Fig-birds (*Sphecotheres vieilloti*) and Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes in a gum tree close by.

April 15: Motored to Gold Creek Reservoir. Very few birds on water. Listed twenty-four species other than water birds; Brown Quail brooding eight eggs in long grass on bank of reservoir. April 22 to 30: (Brisbane generally): Many Cuckoo-Shrikes about. Fig-birds, Golden Whistlers, White-naped Honeyeaters, and Grey Fantails. April 30: Creek Road, eight miles out. Many birds along dry creek bed and adjacent. Found Honeyeaters and Fantails mobbing a Hooded Robin—unusual bird to be so near Brisbane. Several Rose Robins there. Watched a Grey Fantail mimicking a Yellow Robin—taking up the notes as the Robin ended—half a dozen times. Golden Bronze-Cuckoo and Cuckoo-Shrikes seen, about thirty species listed. Two years ago, at mid-winter, I spent half a day observing *Malurus assimilis* in same gully—water there at that time. Have not seen the bird since.

May 10: Cuckoo-Shrikes about—few pairs. May 27: Pardalotes, with young nearly fledged.

June 11: A large number of Fig-birds spent an hour or two in the neighbourhood, then flew north-west. Cuckoo-Shrikes still about. June 16: Identified a Cuckoo that has been calling all week; sure it is a Golden Bronze-Cuckoo.

A Fantail Cuckoo called from a bare branch of a nearby gum tree. June 20: Cuckoo-Shrikes still about in odd pairs. Also companies of Welcome Swallows and Tree-Martins.

July 1: Motored seventeen miles out to Slacks Creek. Saw Pallid Cuckoo in tree—it did not call whilst we were watching—afterwards I heard it. Quantities of Variegated Wrens and Red-backed Wrens in company, the males of both species in beautiful plumage. A well-watered bit of country, with plenty of bird life. July 15 to 19: Cuckoo-Shrikes about every day—two pairs, and an odd bird that is always in trouble. July 19: Motored to Sandgate Lagoons. A goodly number of birds on both lagoons. Gull-billed Terns, White-eyed and Grey Ducks, Teal, Plumed Whistling Duck, White Ibis, Little Pied Cormorants (a dozen birds, but only one with a rufous breast), Black Cormorants, Little Grebes, Moorhens, Coots, "Red-bills," Black-fronted Dotterels, Jacanas, White-headed Stilts, Egrets, Sacred Kingfishers. Welcome Swallows and Fairy Martins very active gathering mud from edge of lagoon. Thence on to Leach's Crossing. Saw three Sacred Kingfishers within ten miles. Welcome Swallows and Fairy Martins, with nests nearly finished at the Crossing. Many Bee-eaters flying in and out of holes in bank.

August 11: Have heard Rufous Whistlers at odd times all winter—just one or two about home, but plenty about the countryside. Noted a Yellow-throated Leatherhead to-day. The bird stayed around alone some days. August 19: Sacred Kingfisher here; it has been three months away from our home locality. Pair of Friar-birds. Still many Cuckoo-Shrikes about. August 31: Friar-birds and Cuckoo-Shrikes about in pairs.

September 1: A number of Sacred Kingfishers about this morning, calling and challenging each other, also Friar-birds, Scarlet Honeyeaters, Rufous Whistlers, Silvereyes, and White-naped Honeyeaters—all in song.

— L. M. MAYO, South Brisbane, Qld., 16/10/37.

**Birds in the City.**—About mid-day on May 21, 1937, I heard, overhead, at the corner of Collins and Queen Streets, Melbourne, what sounded like the call of a Kestrel. Looking up I saw the caller and then two more Hawks. The three Kestrels circled around for some time and one alighted on a flag-pole. Crimson Rosellas have been about Melbourne city buildings for the last five or six years, and a pair of Eastern Rosellas is sometimes seen and heard. The former nested in a hollow in brickwork in a Bourke Street shop. I have seen Kookaburras investigating a hole in the wall of a Queen Street building. A few years ago a Barn Owl sat all one day on a parapet on the Law Courts.

The Rosellas at least have definitely adapted themselves to an urban life and are not transitory forms attracted by

the nearby Botanic Gardens. Twice I have found dead birds in city streets—one a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and the other a Bell-Miner. The presence of the former passing over, perhaps at night, is explainable, but what the Bell-Miner was doing away from its colony is a matter for conjecture.—C. E. BRYANT, Melbourne, 26/5/37.

**The Restless Flycatcher.**—Found in all States of the mainland of Australia, but not occurring in Tasmania, the Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*) is a well-known species in the open forest country. Near Melbourne it is not common except in the dry areas out towards Bacchus Marsh, but most of the outer suburban areas contain a few pairs. Close to the Mitcham railway station one pair has bred for a least nine years and, from the remarkable similarity of the eggs, there has obviously been no change of female during that period. The nesting pair inhabits a small patch of messmate saplings in the backyard of a house on the main road and, according to the occupier, the birds are resident on the block all the year round.

The bird itself closely resembles the better-known Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*), differing mainly in its completely white underparts. The nest and eggs (three in number) also closely resemble those of the latter species, but, as with the bird itself, are slightly larger. The nest is usually placed higher than that of the Willie Wagtail, but in similar positions. It may be found from three feet to fifty or sixty feet above the ground, according to the available building sites. I have seen nests at Melton in late July, although around Mitcham and Ringwood August is the usual commencement of the breeding season. At least two clutches are raised each year—and very often three—the parent birds commencing to build before the young have left the nest. As with the Willie Wagtail a new nest is sometimes built on top of an old one.—R. S. MILLER, Melbourne, Vic., 12/12/37.

**The Value of Bird-life.**—Every ornithologist will be watching with interest the stand of the Victorian and New South Wales Governments for the complete protection of Ducks during 1938. Unfortunately, one of the chief reasons given for this is that it is to prevent reduction in numbers of birds which it is important should be preserved as game birds. When we consider the variety of birds included in the term "duck"? that many sportsmen are not particular what they shoot, and of what great interest and value birds are to us, it stirs us to help in the work of protection that is proposed. Game laws are always difficult to enforce, and in this case much good may be done by educating the public in the economic value of aquatic and other birds.

It is sometimes said that man has destroyed the habitat of ducks by the draining of swamps, and thus there should be a reduction in this form of bird-life. The position is



Restless Flycatcher on nest.

Photo. by K. A. Hindwood.

undoubtedly the reverse. Whilst swamps have been drained, we have created reservoirs, channels, dams and tanks, and in every way watered the country. We have also converted vast tracts of forest land into pasture country. This has created enormous food supplies of plant life and insect life, and the watering places made for stock are ideal situations for greatly-increased numbers of pasture-frequenting aquatic birds. Unfortunately the fox, poison laid for rabbits, and the sportsman, have prevented what would have been a natural working of the laws of nature. Whilst the balance between pasture, insect, and bird-life is being adjusted, man is handicapped in his work by the dominance of the insect. Although our native birds could meet the situation, it appears that eventually the introduced Starling will play a big part in filling the present gap in nature's scheme.

It has been proved in China, where internal parasites are more numerous than here, that sheep may be run on farms where there are ducks to eat the water snails, whilst on similar country, without ducks, the liver fluke kills out the stock. Much the same thing is noticeable in Australia. The Riverina has been famous for its healthy sheep. That has been due to its being naturally a pasture country, well scavenged by aquatic birds. To-day this vast area is becoming overrun with plagues of locusts and other insects, and internal parasites are increasing in our stock. This is due to the loss of such birds as the Emu, Plains-Turkey and Native Companion, and the reduction in the number of ducks. On the other hand, in some districts, such as north-eastern Victoria, liver fluke and other internal parasites are so rampant that they cause very heavy mortality among stock. Those areas were originally dense forest country offering little to pasture-frequenting bird-life. We have created the pasture, but we have *prevented the increase* of scavenging insectivorous birds. At the present time most of north-eastern Victoria is plagued by crickets, grasshoppers, cockchafers, and other insects. It is noticeable that flocks of Ravens, Crows and Ibis are learning to follow the season into the hill country, now that the trees have been removed, and this summer there are very large flocks of Crows around Mansfield, feeding upon green grasshoppers, which are very plentiful.

It is very important to give the public a better knowledge of the value of bird-life. We have a breathing space of a year before another duck shooting season, and during that time we should endeavour to improve the position of our game birds. As a landowner who has tried to save his birds I should like to see all shooting confined to certain localities, and the whole of our pasture country made sanctuary. Admittedly it would be difficult to police such a scheme, but it is exceedingly annoying to have gunmen among one's stock doing untold damage. The scaring of all birds, due

to shooting, lessens their usefulness for they become shy and take to flight at any approach of man. It is imperative that something be done, as each year our troubles are increasing, and the loss of our birds may yet bring famine to Australia. —WM. H. SLOANE, Bonnie Doon, Vic., and Savernake, N.S.W., 3/1/38.

**Strange Nesting Site of Magpie-Larks.**—A friend recently told me of an unusual nesting site chosen by a pair of Magpie-Larks or "Pee-wees" (*Grallina cyanoleuca*). The mud nest was built on one of the cross arms of a telegraph pole at Crow's Nest, North Sydney. The pole supported numerous wires and also overhead tramway and electric light cables. Four sets of tramway lines passed the base of the pole and nearby were two more. Over all these lines trams moved every few minutes during the day and less frequently throughout the night. Actually five main streets radiate from the pole and in consequence thousands of motor cars and other vehicles pass the spot daily. Crow's Nest is the shopping centre of a densely-populated locality and the streets are often crowded with pedestrians, especially on Friday nights when a brass band dispenses music to late shoppers. Regardless of these strange surroundings, for Magpie-Larks at least, and the many noises incidental to a populous area, the birds built their nest and were observed by me almost every day during the greater part of October. I was unable to ascertain whether the young birds eventually left the nest, although from the actions of the adults it seemed that they were feeding nestlings. A photograph was taken, in which although the images are small, one bird on the nest and the other adult nearby are to be seen. Several years ago I remember a pair of Magpie-Larks building in a similar situation; this was at Willoughby, some two miles from the present site and in an environment not so densely populated, although on a main road.—K. A. HINDWOOD, Willoughby, N.S.W., 11/11/37.

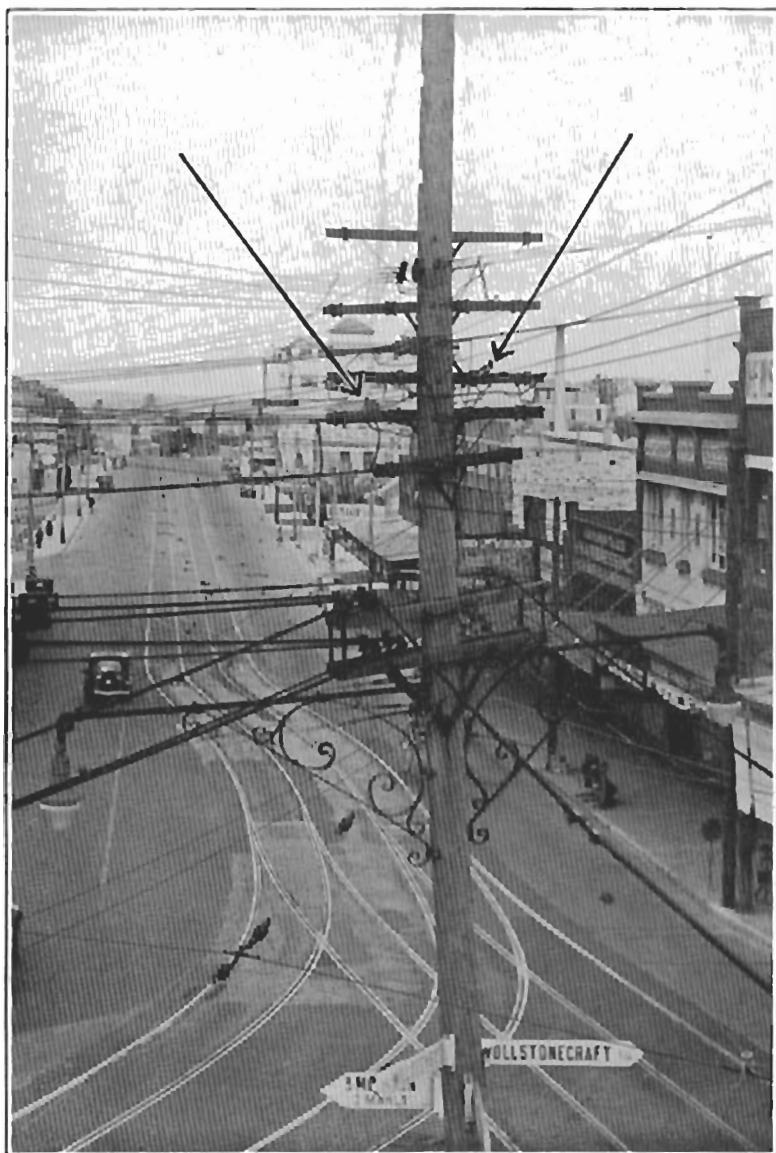
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## Correspondence

To the Editor

Sir,—In the obituary notice of T. P. Austin, appearing in your issue of October 1, 1937, it is stated that his collection of eggs was offered to the R.A.O.U. about ten years ago, and that "when confiscation of eggs in New South Wales, a year or so ago, was threatened, Austin's collection found its way into the Australian Museum."

The truth is that the collection was bequeathed to the Australian Museum by a will dated about twenty years ago, so that it could scarcely have been offered to the R.A.O.U. about ten years ago. When action was being taken regard-



Magpie-Larks' nesting place.

Arrows show sitting bird (left) and mate.

Photo. by K. A. Hindwood.