

LIABILITIES		TRUST ACCOUNT AS
Nil		
Balance, being surplus of Assets over Liabilities . . .	£1,075 16 6	
		£1,075 16 6

The estimates of Assets set out on previous year's basis have been accepted by us; the bank pass books have been examined; and the certificate of the Inscribed Stock registered in the name of the Union and in the names of the Trustees, received by us direct from the Registrar of the Commonwealth Inscribed Stock, have been examined by us and are in agreement with the face value figures shown in Balance Sheet and Trust Account.

(Signed) HUGH C. E. STEWART.

(Signed) P. LAIRD.

Nests of Little Grass-birds

By C. C. LAWRENCE, Lindisfarne, Tasmania

In 1944 some notes of mine on the Little Grass-bird (*Megalurus grammacus*) were published in *The Emu*.¹ The notes drew attention to the occurrence and nesting of a few birds of this species on a small coastal island at Port Sorell in northern Tasmania. A longer acquaintance with the species, and reference to literature not available then, as well as some further data, suggest that the circumstances were more important than I thought at the time.

The occurrence of Little Grass-birds on a dry coastal island is unusual, for the experience of observers over a long period has shown that it is a bird of the swamps and reed-beds. Campbell² said of the species "... one has to wade through the maze of murky swamps, sometimes far inland, to find its wonderfully constructed nest," and observers familiar with the species will agree on the general truth of his remark. However, ornithologists have, from time to time, noted the presence of Little Grass-birds on coastal islands. Gould³ recorded these birds "... on such islands as those of Green and Actaeon in D'Entrecasteaux Channel" (southern Tasmania), but he made no reference to their breeding there. It would be interesting to determine whether Little Grass-birds still occur on those small islands. Campbell² also recorded the island occurrence of this species. He wrote—"Although I have observed the Little Grass-bird among the rough herbage of such places as Breaksea Island, Western Australia, as well as on some of the smaller islands in Bass Strait, there is no evidence of its breeding in such places." However, as my notes of 1944 pointed out, not only does the Little Grass-bird sometimes live away from what has come to be regarded as its natural habitat, but it will also breed there.

AT JUNE 30, 1947

ASSETS

Commonwealth Government Inscribed Stock (face value)	£1,070	0	0
Balance in State Savings Bank		5	16 6
		£1,075	16 6

(Signed) A. S. CHALK,
Hon. Treasurer.Audited and found correct,
(Signed) HUGH C. E. STEWART,
(Signed) P. LAIRD,
Hon. Auditors.

The island at Port Sorell where I found the Little Grass-birds has an area at high tide of about half an acre. Most of it is covered with tussocks and coarse grass, with patches of a rank shrub growing here and there to a height of about four feet. Unfortunately, I was not able to identify the shrub. The island is a rookery for Fairy Penguins (*Eudyp-tula minor*), and the loose soil is pitted with their burrows. The five Little Grass-bird nests that I found on the island were all built in the shrubs at a height of not less than three feet and not, as would be expected, in low situations among the tussocks. This, too, is contrary to the habit of the species. Perhaps the frequent passing of the Penguins through the tussocks caused the Little Grass-birds to prefer the higher nesting sites in the shrubs. North⁴ noted the fact that this species will sometimes build its nest in a relatively-high position. He wrote—"The site chosen for the nest is somewhat varied. I have usually taken it from the bottom of a clump of long rushes within eight inches of the water, and not infrequently in the upright branched fork of a melaleuca, about five feet from the ground, when growing in swampy localities." Campbell² found that nests were "usually situated in rushes or a bush in a swamp or lagoon not far above the surface of the water." However, although these observers recorded nests built in shrubs at heights up to five feet above the ground, there is still, in both the instances referred to, an association with marshy conditions.

A typical Little Grass-bird's nest is deep, oval in shape, with a slight hood over the entrance at the top. Often one or two long feathers droop over the entrance and hide the contents of the nest. In all the references available to me the nest lining is given as feathers. North,⁴ writing of a nest found on the Parramatta River in 1886, by Dr. Hurst, and presented to the Australian Museum, Sydney, described it as being "lined with dried grasses and a few feathers"

(italics mine). Littler⁵ described the nest of this species in these words—"The commonest type of nest here in Tasmania is that constructed of grass and lined with feathers, placed in the centre of a clump of long tussock grass in swampy situations." This suggests that he was aware of variations from the normal type of nest, though he does not describe any.

Of the five nests I examined on the island, two were lined with feathers and agreed very well with published descriptions. Three were lined only with fine grass. Of these, one was very old and may not have been completed. The second of this kind had clearly been used to rear young, and the third contained two addled eggs half hidden beneath drifted leaves. It was apparent that, in that restricted locality at any rate, Little Grass-birds are in the habit of building nests without feather linings. This could not have been due to any shortage of feathers; for the small island beaches are favourite preening places for shore birds, and feathers could be had for the gathering. I have had only a limited experience of Little Grass-birds in the three seasons I have been living in southern Tasmania, but so far I have no records of any variation from feather lining.

The publication of some notes on the Tawny Grass-bird (*Megaturus timoriensis* = *galactotes*) by Mr. K. A. Hindwood in *The Emu*⁶ suggested to me that my notes on the nests of the Little Grass-birds might be of general interest. In the article referred to the author concluded "that the Tawny Grass-bird builds two types of nests—one lined with feathers, the other lined with fine grasses. . . ." My experience with Little Grass-birds in Tasmania indicates that his conclusion may be true also for them.

REFERENCES

1. Lawrence, C. C. *The Emu*, vol. 44, July 1944, p. 75.
2. Campbell, A. J. *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, 1901, p. 224.
3. Gould, John. *Birds of Australia*, 1865, vol. 1, p. 400.
4. North, A. J. *Nests and Eggs of Birds found breeding in Australia and Tasmania*, 1889, p. 146.
5. Littler, F. M. *Handbook of the Birds of Tasmania*, 1910, p. 33.
6. Hindwood, K. A. *The Emu*, vol. 47, July 1947, p. 29.

Glossy Ibis near Melbourne.—On Wednesday, April 28, 1948, I noted a lone Glossy Ibis on a lagoon at Bulleen about 9 miles from Melbourne. It was feeding on the bank and flew at my near approach, but did not leave the pond. On Saturday, May 1, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Bryant and I visited the lagoon and found the bird in almost the same place. It was feeding on the muddy edges. We were able to approach to within about 40 feet, by taking advantage of the cover afforded by rushes. The sheen on the bird was very noticeable in the sunlight. No trace of the bird could be found on the following day or on Monday, May 3.—BRUCE AMOS, North Balwyn, Vic., 4/5/48.