

eagles. Its large shin scales are definitely keeled, evidently as a protective device generally.

(8) All fish, mammalian and bird bones or scales swallowed by the Sea-Eagle are digested, and only fur or feather is disgorged. Fur pellets are exceptionally small for an eagle of such size, evidently because of the fact that the Sea-Eagle is careful to pluck mammalian victims as thoroughly as possible before devouring them.

The Rufous Fantail in City Buildings

By K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W.

On the morning of April 14, 1948, I strolled into Tyrrell's second-hand bookshop, close to Wynyard station, in the heart of Sydney, hoping to find some rare book on birds. Instead, the genial proprietor directed my attention to a 'brownish-looking sparrow' flitting about the roomy ground-floor shop. It was suggested that the unusual visitor, a Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*) was in search of book-worms. In any case, it seemed to find enough sustenance, perhaps flies and spiders (without malice, Mr. Tyrrell) to remain for several hours before leaving for a more natural, if less intellectual, environment. The bird was quite tame and often perched close to people in the shop. The dullness of its plumage indicated that it was either a bird of the season, or a female.

The incident, whilst unusual, is not unique. There are a number of records of migrating Rufous Fantails finding their way into buildings; maybe they are searching for insects, or else have become confused and temporarily lost in the maze of city streets and buildings.

An amusing instance is quoted by A. J. North¹—"Mr. George Masters, Curator of the Macleay Museum at the Sydney University, informs me that while engaged in entomological duties at his table near a window one day, one of these birds found its way into the building. After flying several times backwards and forwards the length of the Museum, it finally selected as a resting place the top of his head, and there it remained for some time until he attempted to put his hands near it."

Sir Charles Belcher states² that the species "... has a remarkable liking for flying inside buildings. I caught one in March, 1910, in the kitchen of my house; and Mr. Riordan tells me that at the end of March 1909, he saw one inside Dalgety's show-floor [Geelong], very tame, and hopping about within 3 feet of him. The same habit has been noticed in this bird in Melbourne at the same time of the year. It may be that the little birds enter in pursuit of flies."

Miss Gladys M. Cheney, of Wangaratta, Victoria, recorded³ the case of one of these birds that came to her house for shelter on Christmas Eve, just before a heavy thunderstorm. Some years ago I noted⁴ the incident of a Rufous Fantail that flew into a Sydney office and remained flitting about most of the day. Late in the afternoon it was captured, taken to a suitable locality by car, and liberated. M. S. R. Sharland, when reporting⁵ the first known occurrence of the species in Tasmania, remarks—"I know of two instances where it has flown into city wash-houses in Melbourne. This seems to suggest that it strays from its course and perhaps for a time becomes lost." One might well ask: Why wash-houses? Melbourne is not quite as dusty as that, surely!

The Rufous Fantail is a spring migrant to south-eastern Australia, where it remains to breed, principally in rain-forest areas, or in sheltered, humid gullies. Near Sydney the first arrivals appear in early September, with migration at its maximum during October, though laggards may be observed, far from any suitable breeding habitat, as late as December. The northward migration in autumn takes place throughout March and April. Observers have recorded stragglers near Sydney, generally in open-forest country, during the winter months—June, July, and August. Personally, I have never observed the species later than April. A. J. North¹ states that it is "... found close to or in Sydney in autumn and winter . . ." P. A. Gilbert also records⁶ that "Laggards may sometimes be observed during winter in open *Eucalyptus* forests." Roy P. Cooper noted (*in litt.*) a single bird in coastal scrub at Marley, National Park, near Sydney, on June 28, 1936.

The species nests commonly in the rain-forest areas bordering the creeks and gullies of National Park, twenty to thirty miles south of Sydney; also, though in much less numbers, in the damp, sheltered gullies of the highlands a little to the north of Sydney. The breeding season in those parts covers the months of October to February, with November to January the period of greatest activity.

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