

jungle to regenerate over the old quarries before the virgin jungles become too small to provide adequate nesting and roosting space for the seabirds.

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Starlings and Falcon eat flying ants.—On the afternoon of March 12, 1966, on the outskirts of Armidale we observed the unusual behaviour of two species—the Starling, *Sturnis vulgaris*, and the Little Falcon, *Falco longipennis*, feeding, on the wing, on flying ants.

Our attention was first attracted by what appeared to be numbers of wood-swallows hawking at a height between 50 and 100 feet above cleared and semi-cleared country. However, closer inspection revealed that the birds were in fact Starlings, although their flight closely resembled that of feeding wood-swallows. Further on, other Starlings were noted flying from a tree to catch insects and then returning to their perches to eat them. These birds appeared unwilling to hawk in the fashion of the others, because of the presence of a Little Falcon overhead. At this point it was observed that the birds appeared to be feeding on pairs of mating ants which were flying about in considerable numbers.

We then transferred our attention to the Falcon and with the aid of binoculars it could be seen that it, too, was catching and eating insects, again apparently mating ants. Its method of securing the ants was as follows: The bird would fly towards its quarry at a leisurely, medium pace and when about three or four feet from the insects, tilt backwards slightly, push its talons forward and thus co-ordinate the catching of the ants. Having completed this the bird would begin a gliding flight for several seconds while it moved its talons forward and bent its head under to transfer the insects and eat them. At one stage it was seen to catch eleven pairs of ants in two minutes.

The observations took place between 4 and 5 p.m. on the southern edge of the town on a rather warm but overcast afternoon. This possibly prompted the mating of the ants and several nests inspected revealed many flying ants leaving. Several pairs were captured and the queen found to be a little over 2 cm. long and the drone 1 cm. long (wings not included in measurements).—**B. WALLACE** and **D. GOSPER**, Newling House, Armidale, N.S.W.

Breeding of the Whistling Eagle.—Some thirty years ago Kuss (1934) recorded observations made by him on the nesting of the Whistling Eagle, *Haliastur sphenurus*, in the Murray River Valley, near Lowbank, S.A. Kuss noted the structure of nests, their dimensions, and heights from the ground. He does not appear to have obtained any information on incubation and nestling periods, and there is no mention in his notes of the existence of a feeding platform attached to any nest.

On July 11, 1965, the junior author and his father (L. C. Heinicke) discovered a nest of the species 15 m. up in a large gum, *Eucalyptus*, tree, about half a mile east of Eudunda, S.A. There is no surface water in the locality. The nest contained two young about ready to fly, and one of them flushed and had to be captured for banding at night with the aid of a spotlight as it roosted on a limb of a tall tree.

On August 29, 1965, the nest was found to contain 2 eggs; on October 10 there were two chicks; and on November 19 the two young were sitting on the edge of the nest. On December 10 one young was perched on a branch near the nest, while the other was still on the nest. On December 12, both young had left the nest.

There was a small feeding platform attached to the eastern side of the nest, and this platform frequently contained food such as kitten rabbits and Galahs, *Kakatoë roseicapilla*. Such platforms do not appear to have been previously reported in the literature on the Whistling Eagle.

This nest was again used in 1966 when fresh sticks and lining of green leaves and waste paper were first observed on May 29. On July 5 there was one egg, and the second egg was recorded on July 10. On August 7 a chick could be heard chipping inside one of the eggs; on August 11 there was one chick about a day old; and the other egg was later found to be infertile. On September 23 the nestling was almost fully feathered but with some down remaining, and on September 29 it left the nest and flew to another tree about a quarter of a mile away.

It will be seen from the above data that the two nestlings in 1965 remained in the nest for about 63 days, while the lone nestling in 1966 had a nestling period of only 49 days, which is 14 days less. Possibly some unknown disturbing factor together with its solitary state in the nest was responsible for the young birds' early departure.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., and R. P. HEIN-
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