

Query—Did the Brown Flycatcher follow the larger bird to secure insects disturbed by the "scissors-grinding" notes? It really seemed so, for the Restless Flycatcher did not altogether approve of the partnership, and tried to chase his attendant away more than once. But the latter was not to be denied, and the two were together till I lost sight of them.

On another occasion I had an opportunity of seeing a Restless Flycatcher at close range. The grinding notes began very low, seeming to come from right down in the bird's throat, and gradually worked up to full strength, when the bill was gaping wide like that of a brooding bird suffering from the heat. As characteristic as the rasping notes, too, are the *calls* of the Restless Flycatcher; I do not think that the "whirring extraordinary" is in any sense a call. The most common of these is a note that would be phonetically expressed as "Britch"—usually uttered while the bird is zigzagging over the tree-tops—and next comes a penetrating pipe, "Pee-pee-pee, towhee-tweet-tweet." A *Seisura* that I frequently saw and heard calling thus while perched on headstones in a cemetery did not seem at all out of place. In its nesting the Restless Flycatcher is by no means so business-like or neat as the bird it is often mistaken for, *Rhipidura motacilloides*. Last spring I knew of an orchard wherein a pair of each species began building at the same time. The Black-and-White Fantail's nest rapidly took form, but the Flycatchers could not get fairly going. They would scratch about on the dry branchlet selected as the nesting-site, but could not get the fibres to stay in position against the strong breezes, and finally gave up the attempt. Earlier in the same season I saw other Restless Flycatchers similarly troubled, for the winds ran high in the dry spring of last year. One pair was twice thwarted in an endeavour to build, but succeeded on the third attempt (in a new position), whereupon a pair of Black-and-White Fantails built in the same tree, on the identical spot that the Flycatchers had unsuccessfully selected in their second attempt. —A. H. CHISHOLM. Maryborough (Vic.), 6/8/15.

---

### From Magazines, &c.

**Nest Built in Trench.**—Corporal Percy Smith, in a letter, dated 10th June, from Gallipoli, to a friend in Bendigo, which was published in the Melbourne *Herald* of 7th August, 1915, states that a bird's nest was found in a trench in which a shell had just burst. "Strange things happen in the trenches at times," he writes. "One of the most extraordinary was the finding of a bird's nest with four eggs. While going through the communication trenches a small bird was seen to fly out of the side, and I began to look where it came from. A shell had burst in the trench, and dirt had fallen off the sides. Among the larger pieces of earth

was a neatly woven bird's nest with four eggs in it. It seems a miracle that a bird should select a communication trench in which to breed its young. I will look on this novelty with a great deal of interest, and watch the result closely."

\* \* \*

**Pale-headed Parrots.**—In the April, 1915, issue of the *Avicultural Magazine* the Marquis of Tavistock writes of "Some Experiences of Mealy Rosellas." Following is an extract from this interesting article:—

"The popular name of *Platycercus pallidiceps* is undoubtedly open to objection, since the word 'Rosella' is nothing more than a meaningless corruption of Rose-hill, a place which the bird in question does not, I believe, frequent. Still, if one were to mention a 'Pale-headed Parrakeet,' I doubt if nine aviculturists out of ten would be much the wiser; so perhaps it is best after all to stick to the familiar title. Some people are disposed to crab the Mealy Rosella on account of the rather washy and undecided tints of his head and neck, but to my mind he is a very lovely bird—what Broadtail, indeed, is not?—and few more tasteful combinations of colour exist than the primrose and blue which adorn the greater part of his plumage. His disposition, alas! does not correspond to the beauty of his outward appearance; in fact, when fully adult and in good health, he can only be described as a spiteful brute. His two pet aversions are the Blue-bonnet and his near relative the Red Rosella. Alone among the *Platycercinae* he is often able to inspire with fear and respect the pert, irascible little monkey in brown and blue, while for the Red Rosella he shows a most unbounded contempt. Hybrids between *P. pallidiceps* and *P. eximius* have been produced in captivity, and may also have occurred wild in Australia, but in my own experience I have never known the two species show any desire to associate except when quite young. Even when I have had odd birds of opposite sexes flying together at liberty for several months, they have never been seen to meet except on the most unfriendly terms. . . .

"During the course of last summer, two new Mealies came into my possession—both, unfortunately, to die after a few weeks—which were interesting from a scientific point of view, and showed curious variations of plumage. The first, a hen, had the crown of the head thickly covered with strawberry-pink feathers, and showed, besides, an unusual amount of blue on the cheeks and on the upper part of the neck. A tendency to erythrisms, it may be noted, is characteristic of several species of Australian Parrakeets, individual Browns, Rosellas, Yellow-bellies, and Many-colours often showing an abnormal amount of red in their plumage. The case of the Red-vented Blue-bonnet is very similar, and personally I do not consider *Psephotus haematorrhous* as really a good species. The second bird I received was a typical *P. amathusia*, the first I have ever seen alive. He was much paler in colour than the

hen just mentioned, quite like an ordinary 'Moreton Bay' Rosella in many respects, hut he had a dark blue patch on the lower cheek, not the circular patch one sees in a Pennant or Yellow-rump, which starts from the base of the lower mandible, but a kind of half-moon lying low on the cheek and not reaching the beak at all. Although this blue cheek-patch is a very noticeable feature, the general resemblance between *P. amathusia* and *P. pallidiceps* is so striking that one can hardly fail to regard them as local races of one variable species, and a series of skins obtained from different localities would probably show the complete gradation of one form into the other. In describing the habits of my Mealy Rosellas there is one point I have forgotten to mention—viz., their playfulness. The *Platycerci* as a family are very serious-minded birds, and do not give themselves up to light-hearted antics. But here the Mealy is rather an exception, and I have sometimes seen my birds playing in true Parrot fashion: turning somersaults, throwing bits of stick about, lying on their backs, and hopping wildly round with spread tails. I once had a Barnard's Parrakeet who behaved in much the same fashion, apparently from delight at the successful hatching of his first family (he was quite a young bird). But I have never known another of his species forget his dignity to such an extent, and the Mealy Rosella is the only true Broadtail that I have often seen play."

---

### Annual Meeting Postponed.

---

It has been unanimously decided by the Council of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union to

#### POSTPONE THE ANNUAL MEETING,

which was to have been held in Queensland this year, and to do the business of the session by correspondence. This decision has been made because Queensland has suffered severely from the drought; and also the Council considers that all our energies and spare money should go towards helping our country in its time of need consequent upon the dreadful war.