

as the entrance itself, and projected horizontally just above the latter. The egg of the Cuckoo was a fine example, the zone of purplish-brown near larger end being very much more marked than in the illustration on plate xvii. of "Nests and Eggs"; there were scattered spots of a minute character over the rest of the surface, and it appeared twice as large as the eggs of the host, but probably this was deceptive. Except for the great difference in size, there was a good deal of resemblance between the egg of the intruder and those of the host, the markings on the latter being the same in character, but a good deal fainter.

The position of the above nest, in a small tangle of grass and bracken, and with a dead bracken lying horizontally across just above the "hood" of entrance, coupled with the absolutely undisturbed appearance of both "hood" and entrance, made it quite clear to my mind that the parasitic egg had been introduced by the bill, and in no other manner. It would have been quite impossible for the female Cuckoo to have "sat upon" this nest in any fashion for the purpose of deposition, or even to have "backed up" against the small circular aperture, as her prominent tail would have pushed the above-mentioned horizontal dead bracken fern quite out of its original position.

For some time now I have devoted a good deal of attention to that most interesting family the *Cuculidae*, and have been noticing the plumage and calls of the various species which visit our island. It is, I think, possible to distinguish the male and female of the Pallid species in the field by shape and markings, and it is probable that the "Knick-knick-knick-knick" call sometimes uttered is the note of the female, especially as it is very similar to the call of the British Cuckoo (*C. canorus*), of the same genus as our Pallid Cuckoo.

In regard to the Fan-tailed and the two Bronze-Cuckoos which visit us, I am unable to distinguish the sexes in the field, and do not know the calls of the females, if they have any calls; but I should like to have the opinion of other experienced field workers as to whether there is any noticeable difference in the plumage and calls of the sexes in these three species.

Colour-Sense in Satin Bower-Birds.

BY H. V. EDWARDS, R.A.O.U., BEGA, N.S.W.

WHILE admitting that Satin Bower-Birds (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) in some instances use articles of other colours—such as red and yellow Parrot feathers—among the decorations of their play-arbours or bowers, it seems remarkable to me that, in the particular instance I refer to, the birds should have confined their ornaments, so far as strong colour is concerned, entirely to such as had a blue tint.

I kept a bower built at the edge of a New South Wales coastal

scrub under close observation for nearly six months, during which time the decorations comprised scraps of blue glass, paper, and rag, purple-blue blossoms from the common flag, or iris, and the wild plant known as "deadly nightshade" (*Solanum semi-armatum*), over a dozen blue-bags filched from neighbouring laundries, and blue tail-feathers from the Crimson Parrot. This colour scheme was only varied by a few yellowish-green petals from some flowering shrub, a couple of snail shells, a spider egg-cocoon, a scrap of diamond snake skin, and the whited skull of a stray Duckling. I hung some scraps of scarlet serge on twigs near the bower, but, although these were pulled down, they were not added to the decorations. Red and yellow flowers and feathers, too, were just as easily available, but the birds passed them by, faithful to their chosen colour. From the vantage point of a garden fence near the scrub the birds might often be watched playing about their bower, tossing the ornaments about in their beaks, and shifting them from place to place. Sometimes the old male Satin-Bird, clad in glossy purple-black livery, came alone, sometimes he was accompanied by a retinue of yellowish-green females and young males. This bower was fashioned of pliant twigs, tough stems from the yellow everlasting daisy, and dry grass. It was eventually destroyed by heavy rains, and not long afterwards another bower, also with ornaments of a blue tint (built, I presume, by the same company of birds), was found in scrub on the opposite side of the garden. The decorations of this bower also included a number of blue-bags. Other observers have also recorded the occurrence (mainly) of blue decorations at Satin-Birds' bowers, but have not referred to this incident as being peculiar. A fine specimen of the jungle tree known locally as "white cedar" grew just outside the fence of this bush garden, and near the bower. On the berries of this tree, when ripe, Satin-Birds, Bell-Magpies, Wonga Pigeons, and large Doves (the introduced Indian Turtle-Dove, I think), feasted royally. I grew a crop of potatoes and maize in the garden, but, it being a season of severe drought, the Satin-Birds occasionally ate the potato leaves, and assisted Crimson Parrots, Bell-Magpies, opossums, and wallabies in stripping the grain from a fair percentage of the maize-cobs. The Black Satin-Bird, by the way, often gave a good exhibition of his powers of mimicry, reproducing very accurately, I thought, the notes of the Laughing Kingfisher, Crimson Parrot, and other birds.

Referring again to this strange preference for blue, a Satin-Bird was seen in another quarter (about a mile away from my bower) looking over the flowers in a garden. The bird finally selected a periwinkle blossom, purple-blue in colour, and flew off with it. Red, yellow, and white flowers were available, but the bird passed them by.

It may be noted that the eye of a Satin-Bird is blue, but whether this circumstance has any influence or not in determining their choice of blue decorations I cannot say.

As regards the choice of nesting material of a certain tint, I was interested last season in watching a Black-chinned Honey-eater fly down again and again from a tall gum-tree in which it was building and tweak a beakful of hair from the back of a creamy pony. Bay and black horses, also feeding about, the bird passed by, nor have I previously seen a Honey-eater—as this one did—calmly alight on a horse's back, though the Black-and-White Fantail, of course, often does so.

Bird Notes from Prairie Table-land, North Queensland.

BY J. R. CHISHOLM, R.A.O.U., THE PLAINS (Q.)

THE home blackboy had just returned from the horse paddock. "I bin see um 'Awk killen um Turkey," he said. "Well, why didn't you fetch the Turkey?" "I no bin tinkin' about him." Perhaps I should not have blamed him. Through life it is good to have one job at a time. I sent him away, and he soon returned with the Turkey (Wild Bustard), weighing 16 lbs. A hole had been eaten in the flesh of the breast. The Hawk is a little tawny Sparrow-Hawk—I am disposed to believe rather smaller than the Kestrel described by Dr. Leach; at any rate, a diminutive chap, but a born criminal.

Another observation lately is a Jabiru in an out-of-the-way place, inducing the belief that these birds fly as high as the Stork. The bird was at windmill water supply in high, dry table-land country many miles from any surface water, and could only have seen the water in the tank if flying at high altitude. It was a male bird, with brilliant plumage sheen of blue, green, and bronze on its head and neck.

On a sheep station it is difficult to see eye to eye with Mr. Froggatt, who would protect the Crow. And, having fish in my reservoirs, my vision is oblique with those who would protect the Cormorant.

My other note concerns the sense of smell once shown by a Boobook Owl. One of a pair was shot, and carried home in the darkness—a fourth of a mile. The other followed, and came to perch on the verandah rail, calling sadly. My wife was much concerned at what seemed uncanny, and foreboding evil.

Amongst the Birds in Out-back Moree, N.S.W.

BY T. H. CLEE, R.A.O.U., MOREE.

A DELIGHTFUL example of the economic value of our bird friends is under notice just now. A severe drought is with us, and every vestige of edible vegetation is of great value to the grazier, and, through him, directly to the people. Large areas here are quite