

## Observations of "Jacky Winter"

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A general favourite is the Australian Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*), more familiarly called "Jacky Winter." The jaunty name seems to suit the bird. He loves to sit on a post or stump, and to swing his tail to and fro sideways, darting out every now and again to catch the insects which form his diet. His size, 5.2 inches, is the same as several of our Robins, and his colour a plain brownish-grey above, and lighter underneath, with the outer tail feathers white—often causes those who do not know him to mistake him for a Hen-Robin. Unlike the Robins, he is not migratory, and may be seen in the one district for years, all the year round. He seems to prefer cleared or lightly timbered country. I have made my observations of him, mainly at Wandin, and also at Panton Hill, where several frequented an orchard. The nest is usually recorded as being built at a considerable height.

At Wandin, early one November, we were fortunate in finding a nest at about five feet from the ground, in a small eucalypt which had very few leaves. The nest was a tiny frail saucer of grass,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches across and less than 1 inch deep: it contained 2 bluish-green eggs.

We spent several hours watching the pair. The male frequently brought food to the sitting hen. We were much amused at her behaviour. As soon as the male was out of sight, she would leave the nest and sit on a nearby branch preening herself. She would return to the eggs and settle herself just before he returned with the next mouthful of insects, which she would accept with great fussing and fluttering. This was repeated many times while we watched. We were forced to suspect that she was obtaining maintenance under false pretences. As the weather was warm, the eggs evidently came to no harm. On our next visit a fortnight later the nest was deserted, and we caught a glimpse of the parents feeding young birds in high branches not far from the nesting site.

The male, like his relative, the "Willie Wagtail," is a courageous little fellow in defence of his home. While we watched he drove away any bird which came within several chains of the nest. A Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) was quickly put to flight; but a pair of Fan-tailed Cuckoos (*Cacomantis flabellifera*) gave him much trouble. They were probably mating, and flew wildly here and there through the trees uttering discordant cries. Jacky attacked vigorously whenever they intruded on his domain, and finally they flew to other parts.

A cheerful little friend to man, our enjoyment as he brightly calls "Peter Peter," is unalloyed, as his diet of insects is all in the orchardists' favour.