



On the creek below Toolern township.



The Bird Cabin, Toolern Vale.

Photos, by John Gray.

old hut on the property. In the latter case the bird must have been using the same roosting place for some considerable time, prior to its being discovered, as there was a large pile of excreta under the place where the bird slept. The bird sought its sleeping quarters well before the departing daylight had left the sky.

As mentioned above, a log is being kept at the cabin, and several birds were noticed which had not been recorded for the sanctuary at the time of which I write, although most of these, if not all, are, I believe, now included in the "official" list. These include the Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*), White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*), Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*), Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*), Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*), Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*) and the Bee-eater. This last-named form had been recorded, however, at that time from the Coimadai district nearby. A pair of Goshawks were found nesting in a tree on the western boundary where they appeared to have nested for a number of years, as several old nests were also discovered.

The number of birds now definitely recorded from the sanctuary is approximately 80 species. I do not in any way intend these notes to be comprehensive, but as merely illustrative of some of the more interesting forms that came under my notice during my sojourn at the Toolern Vale bird sanctuary.

The Toolern Vale Bird Sanctuary

By JOHN M. GRAY, Melbourne, Victoria.

Most Melbourne bird observers are now familiar with the flourishing bird sanctuary at Melliodora Park, Toolern Vale, where many pleasant and profitable excursions have been held during the past few years. As has been remarked before, the area is situated at the southern extremity of a tongue of dry country representative of conditions in central and northern Victoria, and that, coupled with the fact that it is on geologically-new country—always abundant in bird life—is responsible for the interesting variety of the avifauna of the locality. Even in winter one can record between fifty and sixty species of birds without any difficulty in this 240 acre sanctuary, whilst in the spring and summer months visiting and nomadic species often bring the bird list up into the neighbourhood of seventy. The owner of the park, Mr. V. R. Davey, an enthusiastic member of the Union, has recognized the value of his property in this respect, and with commendable foresight has erected a bird observation cabin which he has placed at the disposal of naturalists to assist

their field work. A detailed report of the opening of the cabin appears in *The Emu* of January, 1934 (Vol. XXXIII, p. 25). Since its establishment in October, 1933, many bird observers have enjoyed the privilege of spending week-ends at the sanctuary, and the results are already taking shape in the log kept at the cabin. No imagination is necessary to foresee the vast number of interesting and perhaps valuable observations which will be compiled in this co-operative fashion in the course of years. Among some of the birds already recorded in the log book there are a few species which deserve mention:—The Red-capped Robin; the Rainbow-bird; Black-eared, Brush and Golden Bronze-Cuckoos and several other varieties unusual so far south.

During a week-end visit to the sanctuary (January 27-29, 1934) an attempt was made to set down in figures an approximate estimate of the numerical strength of birds in the immediate locality. The results of this census have been entered in the log and when a full series of similar observations has been recorded, some unique information as to the proportions of the increase and decrease of bird life on a given area will possibly be obtained. Thoroughly complete details are essential to the success of such a scheme, and observers should not fail to note seasonal and weather conditions, rainfalls, etc., in order to build up a better knowledge of the relation of these factors to and their influence upon the distribution of wild life. Although the particulars recorded on this occasion are admittedly scrappy, they constitute the first step in a new field of practical ornithology which as yet has received very little attention here. In all cases the number of individuals of each species was accurately counted. In considering the more common birds widely spread over the park allowance had to be made for distribution. This applied to birds such as the White-backed Magpie, Eastern Rosella and a few others. Thus in dealing with rarer forms restricted in distribution, and gregarious birds easily recognized in their peregrinations around their respective districts, much greater accuracy, in fact nearly 100 per cent. accuracy, could be achieved in estimating their numbers. This census revealed the total of birds in the sanctuary as nearly 700 individuals.

It behoves Melbourne ornithologists to see that interest in this fine area is not allowed to wane.

Grey box (*Eucalyptus hemiphloia*), white ironbark or yellow gum (*E. leucoxydon*), yellow box (*E. melliodora*), red box (*E. polyanthemos*), red ironbark (*E. Sideroxydon*) and brown stringybark (*E. Baxteri*) are found in the park. A few very fine specimens of the red box left from the original forest approach twenty feet in girth.