

and on July 21 when near Erldunda Station, two "turkeys" [Bustards] and numerous Crows were noted (p. 24).

(To be concluded.)

Following offers by several members to purchase the originals of Mr. Cayley's *Emu* plates the Council has decided to sell them, to members only, at £1 1s. each. Those available are from plate 14, volume XXIX, to plate 22, volume XXXVI. Applications will be received up to May 6. Preference will be given to authors wishing to purchase plates accompanying papers written by them only in cases where they have themselves suggested the subject of colour plates. In the event of two or more members wishing to purchase the same plates the decision of the Hon. Editor and the Hon. General Secretary will be final.

Stray Feathers

A Note on Nankeen Kestrels.—Several months ago I noted a Nankeen Kestrel attack a Kookaburra that was flying over my house and which took refuge on the top of a chimney, the Kestrel alighting on a nearby wireless pole. Suddenly it flew straight for the Kookaburra, which, amidst a flurry of feathers, was successful in beating off its attacker. Soon afterwards the Kookaburra departed, flying low over the housetops, with the Kestrel close in pursuit. Whilst the Kestrel was near about fifty Budgerygahs—all of them colour varieties—which were in an aviary nearby, showed evident signs of fear. They ceased chattering and took cover under the roof at the end of their cage. The owner of the birds informed me that he had not purchased or acquired any birds for ten years, all his birds being aviary bred.

The question arises, why should the birds, never having cause to fear a bird of prey, and being removed by some generations from a wild state, exhibit such consternation and alarm at the presence of the Kestrel? The instinct must be inherent. The incident occurred in a closely-settled area and birds of prey are almost unknown there.

While I was watching a match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on November 21, 1936, a Kestrel flew over the playing area. Despite the presence of 36,000 people, it suddenly swooped down to within two feet of the ground and seized a Sparrow in its claws. The latter bird escaped, however, and the Kestrel, after circling several times, flew away.

It is rarely that Kestrels are seen in either of the above localities, but no doubt through the dry conditions that have



Nest of Grey-backed Silvereye in hydrangea bloom.

Photo. by M. S. R. Sharland.

been prevailing in New South Wales for the past ten months they are forced to obtain food wherever they can and undoubtedly that necessity overcomes, to some extent, their fear of man.—ROY P. COOPER, Randwick, N.S.W., 10/2/37.

Birds and Colour.—There could be few more attractive settings for a bird's nest than in the heart of a hydrangea bloom, and few birds except the Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*), perhaps, would select such a position. The Silvereye appears to have some appreciation for colour when it disregards so many more suitable sites in a garden. Two instances of the bird's having nested in hydrangea flowers came under my notice last summer—one at Wahroonga, and another at Homebush, both suburbs of Sydney, and curiously enough I heard of both cases the same day. During the previous summer a similar nesting position was brought under my notice from Ashfield.

One nest that I photographed was hanging in the flower within a few feet of a well-used front door, but the bird became accustomed to the sight of the occupants of the house and exhibited no alarm when they passed in and out.

From observations which I have made over a number of years, I have come to wonder whether birds really like flowers for their beauty alone, or whether they appreciate colour about their nests. The beautiful sites sometimes selected by sea-birds in which to lay their eggs suggests that their choice is not haphazard, but is the result of a definite sense of picturesque scenery. I once found the nest of a Pipit (*Anthus australis*) surrounded by wild buttercups, a nest of a Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) in the midst of some flowering mesembryanthemum above high-water mark, one of a Butcher-bird (*Cracticus torquatus*) among the blossoms of a *Banksia* tree, and those of Honeyeaters among the heath.

Not a season passes but what one finds some nest in an attractive setting, and I believe that some of the sites are selected deliberately for their beauty rather than their utility.—M. S. R. SHARLAND, Sydney, 3/3/37.

Tame Magpie.—Recently I heard of and saw a tame Magpie which built a nest and laid eggs. They were laid one on each of three days and the fourth on the fifth day. As the nest was in a hedge immediately behind the house and as cats were about the lady of the house brought the bird in each night away from the cats, leaving the eggs exposed in the nest. As the bird faithfully returned to and sat on the eggs day after day the eggs were then brought in each night also and placed in an improvised nest in the kitchen, where the bird sat on them—and "listened" to the wireless. The lady took pains to lift the eggs with a rag, avoiding manual contact. The bird sat on the outside nest during each day and on the kitchen nest each night. In time

young birds were safely hatched.—H. O. LETHBRIDGE, Narrandera, N.S.W., 8/12/36.

Vocal Mimicry Among Birds.—In two papers in *The Emu* recently—"Annotations" (vol. xxxv, pp. 211-15) and "Various Bird Problems" (*ibid*, pp. 317-23)—I raised a number of questions concerning field observations. The only one that has drawn detailed replies is the subject of vocal mimicry among birds. Two Queenslanders, Messrs. E. A. R. Lord, of Murphy's Creek, and H. Thorogood, of Proserpine, have sent informative notes regarding the mimetic ability of the Black-throated and Grey Butcher-birds, the Brown and Lemon-breasted Flycatchers, the Grey Thrush, and the Drongo. Also, Mr. K. A. Hindwood, a New South Wales member, has sent me two notes on the Whip-bird as a mimic (of the Grey Thrush and the Satin Bowerbird respectively), and has reported having heard recently a Shrike-Tit imitate the notes of the Brown and Restless Flycatchers, Black-chinned and Fuscous Honeyeaters, Red-tipped Pardalote, and Pallid Cuckoo.

Some of the birds mentioned as mimics were already on record, but others were new to my list of mockers, which now contains thirty-six species of Australian birds and three species introduced from Britain.

Brief comment may be made on various references to vocal mimicry which appeared in *The Emu* for October last (vol. xxxvi, pt. 2). Mr. E. L. Hyem's note on the Brown Flycatcher (Jacky Winter) as a mocker tallies with what Mr. Lord says of the species, and with what Mr. Thorogood says of the related Lemon-breasted Flycatcher; both species appear to mimic only occasionally and then in "whisper-songs." I would add that it is curious that the birds of the *Microeca* genus appear to be alone among the Flycatchers as mimics. A detailed note on mimicry by the Horsfield Bush-Lark given by Mr. A. C. Cameron (p. 133) is interesting although not new. C. F. (now Sir Charles) Belcher recorded it in his book, *The Birds of Geelong* (1914), and the point was amplified in my *Ibis* paper on vocal mimicry (1932). A third note on the subject in the October *Emu* (p. 131) is one in which Mr. Hugh Milne says that the two species of *Hylacola* meet in the Bendigo district, and that, although the species are closely allied and similar in habits, *H. pyrrhopygia* mimics and *H. cauta* apparently does not. That strikes me as a singular anomaly. As previously noted, *H. pyrrhopygia* (Sydney's "Heath-Wren") is known to many ornithologists as a highly-accomplished mimic, wherefore I was surprised, when in the Victorian Mallee, at being unable to detect mimicry in the notes of *H. cauta*. What explanation is to be offered for this vocal divergence among closely-related species?

Two further notes on vocal mimicry are given in *The Emu* for January. Mrs. Mayo is mistaken in supposing that she has not previously reported having heard a Whip-bird imitate a Grey Thrush and a Rufous Whistler; she related the incident in the *Queensland Naturalist* in 1927 (p. 51). Nevertheless the occurrence was worth recording again, for it appears to be a striking example of "impromptu" mimicry. The second note, by Ellis McNamara (New South Wales) also gives an eloquent example of mimicry by a Whip-bird and adds an instance of mimicry on the part of a Shrike-Tit. Both of these species are on my list of mimics, but the additional notes are welcome. It is hoped that other members of the R.A.O.U. will record observations on the subject from time to time, due care being taken to ensure that the mimicry is correctly interpreted.—A. H. CHISHOLM, Melbourne, Vic., 1/3/37.

Notes on the Greater Moustached Swift (*Hemiprocné mystacea*).—The Greater Moustached Swift has a wing spread of over two feet, and as I can find no mention of this bird in looking through copies of *The Emu*, I think a few notes may be of interest. I have only come across this bird on one visit to New Guinea, although on one occasion I went with a companion on a five weeks' trip across Papua from north to south, during which we crossed the Owen Stanley Range, collecting for Rothschild, and have also visited New Guinea and the Mandated Territory once a year during the last fourteen years. On September 8, 1935, in Rabaul, New Britain, I saw half a dozen birds which were new to me, soaring, with an occasional wing flapping, high overhead, 1,000 feet or so, and, on enquiring of local residents, they said they thought they were a species of small Hawk.

A few mornings later I had risen by starlight in the early morning to see what I could of the Nightjars which were giving their final peculiar metallic "chonk-chonk" before lying up for the day. At the first streaks of dawn I found a dozen or so birds, hawking after insects, with a subdued twitter, around and over the top of a tree. They were easily identified as a species of Swift and as the same high-flying birds that I had seen a few days previously. I found one apparently sitting on a branch of little more than an inch diameter, about eighteen feet from the ground in a sparsely-foliaged tree, with all the set placidity of a bird on the nest, although no nest was visible from directly below. It remained for the next half hour in that position, occasionally looking down full-face at me.

On returning a few hours later the bird was still there, but left for a short flight when its mate came near, and I could then see the nest, although all that was visible was a slight, semi-circular, cup-like rim projecting slightly up

from and beyond one side of the small branch. It had a diameter about equal to that of an average pocket watch.

Although the bird is fast in flight, I think it is less speedy than our Spine-tailed Swift. With the wind from behind there is a distinct crest-like raising of the feathers on top of the head, about the same as in a Crested Tern, the most distinctive feature being the two pairs of long white plumes or moustaches extending back from the base of the bill, one above and one below the eye, the lower one being about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and giving a very peculiar appearance on full face view. The plumage on top of the head and wings is a glossy blue-black as in the Welcome Swallow, with a white patch on the median edge of the wing; the breast, back and abdomen are grey. There are two good mounted specimens in the Australian Museum in the first case on the left of the entrance to the foreign birds section, as well as specimens of the Lesser Moustached Swift. The distribution there given is "Moluccas, New Guinea, Duke of York Islands and Solomons."

The bird, like all the Swifts, has weakly-developed feet and one wonders how the young bird is able to retain its hold in such an exposed position during the tearing winds that are so prevalent in New Guinea. This point also interested me in the case of the White Tern, as I once observed the bird daily from the verandah of the bungalow on Maty Island, from incubation to the time of its first flight. The egg was simply glued by salivary secretion to the branch of a high *Casuarina* close to the sea shore, where it was exposed to absolutely tearing winds almost daily.

I can find very few records of the Moustached Swift, and Mr. Roy Kinghorn, of the Australian Museum, tells me he can find none giving much information. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant (*Ibis*, 1913) writing of the birds obtained during the B.O.U. expedition to New Guinea, records: "A pair of magnificent Moustached Swifts, *Macropteryx mystacea*, with wing expanse of more than 2 feet. The nesting habits are peculiar, it makes a very small exposed half saucer-shaped nest of bark and feathers gummed by saliva to a branch or stump which is barely large enough to contain the single white egg." Also *The Ibis*, 1915, Jubilee Supplement, No. 2: "I only observed the Moustached Swift in the mountains where it perched on the topmost branches of very tall dead trees; it has a graceful flight and utters a pretty warbling song. Mr. Goodfellow tells me he saw a smaller species on the coast in September, but could not secure any."

All the time the bird was on the nest it kept its "after end" over the rim of nest, its head and breast projecting over the other side of the branch. While the bird is in flight the tail is forked in the form of two slightly diverging lines right from the base of the tail.—ERIC POCKLEY, Sydney, N.S.W.

Additional Observations at Marlo.—Having a desire to investigate further the extensive heaths towards Cape Conran, almost inaccessible during the Camp in 1935 (*vide The Emu*, vol. xxxv, p. 219) owing to swampy tracts, Marlo was again visited during the first week of November, 1936.

A Ground-Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*) was flushed a few minutes after entering an extensive heath inland from Point Ricardo. It flew a zig-zag course to the timber edge about a third of a mile distant. Half a mile farther on I left the track and ten yards in another Ground-Parrot was seen on a tussock. It arose and flew fully half a mile. Investigation of the tussock showed a nest occupied by four young Parrots. They were about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and rather plump. The down, of a stone-grey colour, was being replaced on the wings, each side of the back, and on the lower breast by feathers of adult colouring. The bill was well developed and of flesh-pink colour; the legs and feet also were flesh-pink, the latter being well developed, almost as large as those of adult specimens; no red was yet apparent on the forehead.

The nest was formed by nipping short the inner stalks of the tussock, which was about 12 inches in diameter and 18 inches high, the resulting cavity being about 6 inches in diameter. No lining was added. A trampled mass of excreta was on the bottom. The close outer stalks made an effective hood and the chicks were barely discernible. After a while they became restless and pushed through the tussock and sought cover nearby. The next morning only one chick, quite healthy in appearance, but smaller than the others, was in the nest, no sign of the other chicks being seen. Two more adult Parrots were seen in different parts of the heath. Both flew a very short distance, and, when flushed again, flew a zig-zag course for a considerable distance.

The future welfare of the Ground-Parrot in this locality is not assured, as fires have ravaged large sections of the heaths and miles of surrounding scrub during late years, and added to that is local agitation for a metalled road from Marlo, through the heaths, to Cape Conran and then to the Prince's Highway.

Of sea and shore birds noted and not recorded in 1935 there were in 1936 the Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*) and a Sandpiper, probably the Sharp-tailed (*Erolia acuminata*). Several large parties of migrant waders, composed mainly of Curlews (*Numenius cyanopus*) and Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*), arrived on November 1, and, after resting for a few hours, broke up to feed. Pied Oyster-catchers (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) were found with well-grown young. There was an almost total absence of Dotterels as compared with the previous year.

A day spent on the extensive river and lake system showed only a huge flock of Black Swans (*Chenopsis atrata*), a few Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) and odd Cormorants. A summary of duck season opening-day reports from the district for the last few years shows that "bags" have dropped to single birds or none at all. Authentic reports tell of huge flocks of wild fowl twenty years ago. This diminution, in a locality of favourable habitat, provokes much thought.

Of passerine forms seven additional species, and of swamp forms two additional species, were noted this year. The most interesting were the Scarlet Honeyeater (*Myzomela sanguinolenta*), which was distributed throughout the bigger timber, Regent Honeyeater (*Zanthomiza phrygia*) and the Black-faced Flycatcher (*Monarcha melanopsis*). Of the last-named several birds were seen in the margin of thick, swampy scrub bordering the Brodribb River. The remaining passerine species were White-browed Wood-Swallow (*Artamus superciliosus*) and Masked Wood-Swallow (*A. personatus*), a large, mixed flock being about for a day and then moving on; Fairy Martin (*Hylochelidon ariel*); Lewin Honeyeater (*Meliphaga lewini*), only a single bird being seen, fearless and allowing a close approach—it was feeding in a riverside tree which also sheltered an Azure Kingfisher (*Alcyon azurea*).

A pair of Chestnut Teal (*Querquedula castanea*) was observed to alight on a large dead tree, about thirty yards from Richardson's Lagoon (see map, *The Emu*, vol. xxxv, p. 220), on a timbered hillside. While the male kept a wary lookout from the topmost position, presenting a fine appearance in the sunlight, the female closely inspected all the spouts. They then flew to another dead tree, repeated the performance, and finally flew to the lagoon. A Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) was heard calling from Richardson's Lagoon.

White-winged Trillers (*Lalage tricolor*) and Leaden Flycatchers (*Myiagra rubecula*), seldom seen in 1935, were fairly numerous. The latter was seen building about fifty feet up, on a narrow, dead branch, both birds working on the nest. In another area a pair was seen attacking a Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*). The Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) was much more common than in 1935. According to a resident of many years it did not appear in the district until after the Prince's Highway was opened; its distribution in the Marlo district appears to be confined to a small colony in the vicinity of Richardson's Lagoon. Emus (*Dromaius novæ-hollandiæ*) are reported to be numerous in the country east of Marlo. Three Emus, feeding with cattle in a paddock near the Brodribb bridge, are



Female Painted Honeyeater near nesting site, with skinned mistletoe berry for young.

Photo. by K. A. Hindwood.

semi-wild birds that come and go at their pleasure; they are protected by local interest as a tourist attraction.

Birds noted in 1935 and not seen in 1936 were: Gannet, Gull-billed Tern, Darter, Grey Duck, White-eyed Duck, Coot, Crake sp., Fan-tailed Warbler, Heath-Wren, Brush Bronzewing, Wonga Pigeon, Spotted Quail-Thrush, Ground-Thrush, Pilot-bird, White-eared Honeyeater, Grey Currawong, Shrike-Tit, Spotted Pardalote, Butcher-bird, Noisy Miner, Flame Robin, White Cockatoo, Swift Parrot, Straw-necked Ibis, Wedge-tailed Eagle.

An interesting fact is that the mouth of the Snowy River has shifted about 100 yards east since the time of the Camp, and, if no high floods occur for a year or two, the river will possibly resume its original course along the backwater. As that will destroy the sand-flats, waders will probably diminish in number.—JACK JONES, Parkville West, Vic., 24/11/36.

Notes on the Painted Honeyeater.—Since the publication in 1935 (*Emu*, vol. XXXIV, pt. 3, Jan., 1935., pp. 149-157, pls. 15-16) of a review of the literature, together with field notes from various sources, relating to the Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*) additional data has become available. In order to co-ordinate these records the following references and observations are given:

Morse, F. C. "Birds of the Moree District," *Emu*, vol. XXII, 1922, p. 35. This was overlooked in my paper of 1935. In writing of the Painted Honeyeater, Mr. Morse states:

"At times fairly plentiful in certain parts of the district, but I think their movements are influenced by the fruiting of the mistletoe, on which they seem entirely to feed. Mr. Mawhiney and E. Rickman found several of their fragile nests in the belar and myall trees in 1920. This year none are about and there is likewise no fruit on the mistletoe."

Cohn, Marc. "Painted Honeyeater," *Emu*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 315-6:

Notes on the species from the Bendigo district, Victoria.

Geary, N. "The Painted Honeyeater," *Emu*, vol. XXXIV, p. 318:

Mr. Geary records the annual appearance, between the months September and December, of the Painted Honeyeater in the Dalby district, Queensland. The birds were noticed feeding on mistletoe berries and apparently on the berries of the pepper trees.

Chisholm, A. H. "Various Bird Problems" (The Painted Honeyeater), *Emu*, vol. XXXV, pp. 318-9:

Mr. Chisholm gives some field notes on a pair of Painted Honeyeaters which visited Eltham, Victoria, during October-December, 1935. Particular reference is made to the call-notes of these birds and comparison made with the call-notes of a pair observed by him in the Sydney district in 1932.

I have received a letter from Mr. E. Wood, of Plumpton,

about twenty-five miles west of Sydney, who observed several Painted Honeyeaters in that locality during the early part of 1936. No field notes were made at the time. In December, 1936, Mr. J. Ramsay found a pair of Painted Honeyeaters breeding in a river "oak" (*Casuarina Cunninghamiana*) on the banks of the Nepean River at Wallacia, thirty-five miles west of Sydney. This area is similar to that where Mr. Ramsay found breeding birds in 1919 (*Emu*, vol. XIX, 1920, pp. 273-4) near Richmond, which is twenty miles north of Wallacia.

I visited the nest at Wallacia on December 13 when it contained two recently-hatched young which were fed by their parents with the berries of a mistletoe (*Loranthus Cambagei*) growing profusely on the *Casuarina* trees exclusively. The berries were skinned before being given to the nestlings. It was noticed that the parents were particular in removing seeds and excreta voided by the young birds. They would search intently both the inside and outside of the nest; this was necessary to prevent it from becoming fouled by the partly-digested berries which still had much of the sticky flesh adhering to them. The nestlings generally voided soon after being fed. The parents would stay at the nest and immediately take the excreta, mixed with the seeds, and swallow it. I have observed this habit among many species of birds, particularly Honeyeaters.

Several Painted Honeyeaters were calling in the neighbourhood, and another nest, containing two eggs, was found on the opposite bank of the river. No doubt other pairs were nesting because on a subsequent visit birds were calling from the same trees as during the previous week.

The call-notes of the birds varied considerably: apart from the usual loud "Geor-gie" call, which reminded me of the call of the Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula*), they frequently uttered a double call in which the second note was lower in tone than the first. It can best be expressed in the words "Chee-haw." A loud single note was also given and also a soft chattering call when the birds were at or near their nests.

Very little is known about the movements of the Painted Honeyeater, nor is it likely that any definite information will be forthcoming until systematic banding is extensively undertaken. At present that is an impossibility and is likely to remain so for many years, because of a scattered population in a vast continent and an almost entire absence of interested and competent workers in field ornithology.

The species appears to be a summer breeding migrant to south-east Australia and its presence in certain localities is governed by the quantity of mistletoe berries available.—
K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W., 4/3/37.



Painted Honeyeater at nest—illustrating the usual position when the bird is feeding young, also the flimsy nest.

Photo. by K. A. Hindwood.

Painted Honeyeater in Melbourne Metropolis.—Many Honeyeaters and other birds frequent "Belmont Park," in Balwyn, six miles from the city, five acres of unfenced land on which many large eucalypts have been left standing. On January 28, 1937, I noted a single Painted Honeyeater there. I had it under observation for about thirty-five minutes. It did not call, but kept constantly moving, often flying quite low from the trees. I had no opportunity of observing it again, so do not know how long it stayed. The locality is about ten miles from Eltham, where the bird has often been seen, but there is nothing ordinarily to connect the two places.—J. J. BRYANT, Balwyn, Vic., 9/3/37.

Moorhen Notes.—The drought times that we have passed through during the winter and spring months of 1936 made conditions unfavourable for the breeding season of the Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*), owing to the rapid drying up of surface waters. Creeks which are usually permanent running streams became gravel and sand beds with an occasional water-hole fed by soakage or by small springs. In the early springtime while the creeks were still carrying a small flow of water several pairs of Moorhens were observed re-building their last year's nests in readiness for the November nesting. By the end of October the water-holes at which the nests were located had dried to such an extent that they could not supply the food or protection that the birds required, so a hurried migration was made to a water-hole about a mile down the creek which was fed by a small spring that kept the water to near the normal level.

Apparently the birds were ready to lay. One pair built a hurried nest of green grass and commenced laying before the grass had time to wilt. It was situated in an unusual place, being on an old fence post with a few sticks across it, which had been deposited by some flood of other years. The nest was placed at the edge of shallow water and partly under a low bank with no cover whatever to conceal it from the eyes of prowling Crows, foxes, and other nest robbers. An inspection a few days later revealed an empty shell with a large hole in the side and a number of pieces of broken shell in the then dried grass nest.

On October 15, before the Moorhens had been driven from their old nesting-places, I had a most interesting experience with a hen bird which I had seen swim across the water and disappear beneath a leaning tea-tree which afforded scanty cover. Approaching the spot I was surprised to find that she had submerged tail first to a depth of about six inches, the legs being bent at the knee and the outspread feet held in front of the bird's head. The head was bowed down over the breast and the bird remained quite still. She had no grip on anything with feet or bill

to prevent her from either rising or sinking. I watched for more than a minute but she made no effort to come to the surface for air and showed not the slightest sign of distress. I removed the bird from the water and was surprised that she made no attempt to escape and showed little resistance when handled. When released she walked quickly to the water and swam quietly away to cover.

The base of the bird's bill and the frontal plate were orange and the bill was blood red at the centre—like blood splashes over orange. I thought the orange frontal plate was peculiar* as birds I had watched at close range during last summer's breeding season appeared to have blood red plates. I later examined the male bird as it hid in a tea-tree only six feet from me and found that it, too, had the orange plate. I then had a look at another pair of birds a little distance away and found that the orange colour was in evidence with them also. Further observation will be necessary to determine when the red and the orange colour changes occur.—E. A. R. LORD, Murphy's Creek, Qld., 22/11/36.

*The orange is not unusual. Gould's description, and others' later, refer to it. Changes from orange to red are doubtless seasonal.—ED.

Bounty System Fails.—I have received from Mr. Richard H. Pough, of the National Association of Audubon Societies, some interesting observations on the control of wild life, particularly predatory species, and the bounty system in America. Regarding the latter, Mr. Pough writes that many States have tried the system with absolutely no success. Pennsylvania has paid \$1,500,000.00 on bounties over the past twenty years, but in 1935 bounties were paid on as many scalps as when bounties were first put into effect. That would seem to indicate that predatory species had reached a maximum level prior to the payment of bounty, and that they had a breeding potential sufficient to maintain that normal population in the face of persecution. Authorities are now convinced of their folly and are beginning to abolish bounties. In many regions where bounties have been discontinued there has been no tremendous increase in the species. They have simply increased up to the normal carrying capacity of the habitat and then become more stationary in numbers. Predatory species often have nothing that preys on them, but Nature has many other ways of holding the species in check. Species that always have been held in check by predation require such control if they are not to damage other forms of wild life. Many sportsmen, however, form the mistaken view that predation is the only natural method of control, and they therefore argue that unless they prey upon the predatory species the latter will increase and destroy everything else. The utter nonsense of that argument is all too apparent to

any biologist who knows anything about the continuity of life in a given region. A realization of the above principles would be useful both in Australia and here in New Zealand. —ROBT. H. D. STIDOLPH, Masterton, N.Z., 14/10/36.

Food of the Little Lorikeet.—This small Lorikeet or Honey-Parrot (*Glossopsitta pusilla*) lives largely on nectar from *Eucalyptus* blossoms. Recently I have noticed it feeding on mistletoe berries—at Wallacia (Sydney district) on December 13, and again five days later when a number of the birds were observed in large river "oak" trees in that locality. The trees were the hosts of a mistletoe (*Loranthus Cambagei*) then in fruit. Because of the height of the trees and of the smallness of the birds and their cryptic coloration, it was not possible to observe the method of feeding. An opportunity for closer observation occurred on February 14, 1937, at Scheyville, near Windsor, some thirty miles west of Sydney. Two Little Lorikeets were then seen, feeding on the fruit of *Loranthus gaudichaudi* growing on a paper-bark (*Melaleuca*) tree. I was able to climb the tree to within a few feet of the birds without disturbing them. They were not eating the mistletoe berries as expected, but were breaking the leathery outer skin and sucking the juice from the whitish flesh which surrounds the seed. This was done in a nibbling manner. They were extremely dainty feeders and often the berries would not be broken from the stalks.

A. J. Campbell (*Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, pt. II, 1901, p. 598), in writing of the feeding habits of the Little Lorikeet, remarks: "It may often be seen threading, hanging sometimes head downwards, the slender branches of the mistletoe, feeding either upon the flower or fruit of that parasitical plant."—K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W.

Foxes Attacking Swans.—In the *West Australian* of February 1, 1937, appeared a paragraph to the effect that, owing to the dry season, Lake Muir, Western Australia, is drying rapidly and thousands of Ducks and Swans are feeding in its shallow waters. The long, dry beaches provide a resting ground for bird life, but they are also a death trap for Swans. Hundreds of dead Swans with the head and part of the neck removed, have been noted. This was apparently the work of foxes, the tracks of which were seen everywhere in the sand. Being slow to take flight, the Swans fall an easy prey to the fox. The lake was more than twenty miles in circumference, so it was difficult to tell how many Swans were being killed, but on the area inspected it seemed that many were meeting their deaths each night.

I am not in a position to confirm the facts stated in the cutting, but am of the opinion that the recent dry seasons are having a profound effect upon the bird-life in the south-west of this State. ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Nangeenan, W.A.