A New Record of the Western Bristle-bird
By K. G. BULLER, Nedlands, W.A.

As has already been briefly reported in the previous issue of *The Emu*, a specimen of the Western Bristle-bird (*Dasyornis longirostris*) has been collected—the first since March, 1907—thus allaying suspicions that the bird might have become extinct. A more particular account of the circumstances of the find would, no doubt, be of general interest, though it is not considered desirable at this stage to reveal its exact location.

At the end of January this year (1945), I visited Albany for a brief stay, and whilst there an excursion was arranged with our member, Mr. Charles Allen, of Cuthbert. After an early start on February 5, we travelled some considerable distance through open bush along a heavy sand track, and eventually reached thicker and denser country. My companion stopped the car at the eastern end of a large belt of low scrub, where the thick undergrowth was covered with a tangle of creepers. This was about a mile from the sea-shore. Bush-fires had passed over neighbouring country, the nearest burnt part being about two or three miles away, but this particular spot appeared as if it had not been fired for some considerable time.

Mr. Allen and I moved out in different directions with hopes of seeing or hearing something of interest. During the first half-hour we distinguished only the calls of Emu-Wrens (*Stipiturus malachurus*) and Yellow-winged Honey-eaters (*Melichorhina nova-hollandiae*), when suddenly, and without any warning, a loud piercing whistle echoed through the undergrowth, a few chains from us both. At first we thought the stranger responsible for this lusty call must have been some other person close by, as the whistle was identical with what would be emitted by someone trying to attract attention. However, a moment’s reflection soon satisfied us that that was very improbable, considering the isolated area where we were searching. Then another similar call rang out, which appeared to come from the ground in front of us, but was difficult to pin-point exactly. The loud whistle was just a single note, and ended abruptly, as if chopped off suddenly. It was quite unfamiliar to my companion.

We waited, tense; to see if anything would show itself, when suddenly Mr. Allen noticed something move ahead of him in the undergrowth. He was unable, however, to tell what species it might be, as the bird disappeared like a flash. A little later, yet another whistle was heard, as unvaried as the previous calls. I tried mimicking the
whistles, but without results. We waited a long time hoping
that the bird might show itself, but it was apparent that
the bird would not oblige.

I therefore decided to track down the bird into its bushy
fastness. I battled my way through much tangled under-
growth and wire-like creepers, and at times it was very
difficult to make any headway. Eventually I reached a small
clear spot, only a few feet in circumference, and there
decided to wait and watch. In about ten minutes’ time I
earned the fruits of patience, for, just in front of where
I was crouched, I caught a glimpse of a small greyish-
brown bird hopping about in the undergrowth, about two
feet from the ground, and a few yards away. It seemed
to me that the bird was inquisitive, and was trying to get
a better view of me. I do not know whether it is of any
significance but I was not clad entirely from the stand-
point of concealing coloration: though I wore a green
lumberjacket and khaki shorts, I had on a pure white
panama hat. The bird lurked in the vicinity for some five
to ten minutes, carrying its tail almost erect, and at
intervals it would fan out its tail by spreading the quills.
All its movements were very jerky, and it was quite silent
at this stage.

It was becoming apparent that the bird was getting
restive, and preparing to disappear altogether. Up till
now I was not prepared to say what species it might be,
so I had to make a quick decision. A lucky shot proved
successful, and when I picked up the specimen I recognized
it as the long-sought-after Western Bristle-bird.

Other whistles of the same type were heard later in the
day, thus showing that more birds were around. One call
was even heard within a stone’s throw of an inhabited
fishermen’s camp. This locality is often visited by fisher-
men and campers, so it is clear that the bird will tolerate
a certain amount of human activity.

The bird I collected was a female, in moult. The skull
was ossified, the ovary small and the oviduct small but
twisted, indicating that the bird had bred. The specimen
has been presented to the Western Australian Museum.

The following note on the stomach contents was supplied
by Mr. C. F. H. Jenkins (Government Entomologist):

"The stomach was filled with finely divided chitinous particles,
representing the remains of numerous small undentifiable Coleoptera
and Hymenoptera, one small Tenebrionid (Helicinae, pie-dish
beetle) and seven small Acrididae (grasshoppers). The plant
remains submitted to the Government Botanist, Mr. C. A. Gardner,
comprised 4 grass seeds (Japanese millet?) and three other very
small seeds. A number of small clear quartz grains were also present.
After an examination of the bird’s brush-tipped tongue, it was
thought that this might be a special adaptation for the capturing
of flower haunting insects, but the facts do not support this theory.
Although all the insects were very small, the presence of several"
Acridiids and the absence of any membranous wing remains associated with the Hymenoptera, suggest ground feeding. The brush-tongue may of course be useful in apprehending very small creatures such as comprised the main diet of the specimen concerned. The paucity of plant remains in this specimen contrasts with the diet of the Rufous Bristle-bird (D. broadbenti), as listed by Lea and Gray (The Emu, xxxv, p. 167), for seeds or berries figured prominently in 12 out of the 13 stomachs examined."

Nesting Notes on Plumed Tree Ducks

By A. F. D'OMBRAIN, West Maitland, N.S.W.

The following nesting notes concerning Mr. A. Bailey's Tree Ducks (Dendrocygna eytoni) are to be read as supplementary to those appearing in The Emu for April, 1945:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 to 30</td>
<td>Fixing nest. 5.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1st egg. 6.10</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>4th egg. 7.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fixing nest. 6.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fixing nest. 6.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5th egg. 6.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6th egg. 6.00 p.m. Stopped on nest till morning</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>7th egg. 6.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8th egg. 5.50</td>
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The birds started to sit on February 15, both birds sharing in the incubation and changing shifts about every twenty-four hours. They always change between six and seven in the evening. The drake approaches the nest and stands a few yards away, looks everywhere to see that no danger threatens, gives a whistling call and is answered by the duck. On his arrival at the nest, the duck slips quietly off at one side and the drake at once enters from the other.

The nest is built under fairly dense fern, and other shrubs, alongside a brick wall, and within a few feet of the entrance to the house. When first hollowed out the nest was nothing more than a hole in the earth about four inches in depth and ten inches across, with no sign of any form of lining. It was not until the third or fourth egg