

rookeries. Not only did parties come from Melbourne, but from Geelong and even Ballarat. Several ladies accompanied their husbands, being provided with tents and the necessary utensils to enjoy the novelty of an egging picnic for a few days.

Forgotten Feathers.

ONE of the first-described nests of the Coachwhip Bird was recorded in a paper read by A. Dobree, Esq., before the Royal Society of Victoria on 27th August, 1861. The writer says:—"The present nest and eggs were obtained by me near the banks of the Yarra Yarra, near Heidelberg, on one of those points of land or 'bends' of the river still left in their original state, and where the underwood and tangle are extremely dense. . . . The female bird was sitting so closely as almost to allow herself to be captured, thus removing all doubt as to the identity of the nest and eggs. The nest was in the most tangled part of the thicket, and was placed in the forked branches of a shrub, about 4 feet from the ground. It is cup-shaped, about 5 inches outside diameter; the exterior of dry slender twigs, and the interior lined with thin fibres and a few pieces of horsehair, the latter evidently owing to the accidental vicinity of some farms; the whole structure is neither very solidly nor elaborately built. It contained two eggs—length *exactly one inch*, extreme width *three-quarters of an inch*. In shape they are not much pointed at the thinner end, and the greatest girth is about the middle. Their ground colour is pale greenish-blue, with streaks and dots of various sizes scattered pretty equally over the whole surface; these markings are of a brownish-black colour, and of two kinds—the one being very distinct and sharp, the other somewhat less numerous, more greyish, and much fainter, having the appearance of being under the shell. From the fact of the bird sitting so closely, I conclude that no more than two eggs are generally laid, though the present ones had not yet been perceptibly incubated. I regret to say I have kept no precise memorandum as to the date of the finding of the nest, but believe it to have been about the end of October."

It may be added that the Coachwhip Bird was heard in Willsmere Park, East Kew, amongst the dense scrub which then existed there, several times as late as the spring and summer of 1886. The bird was possibly there later, but an interval of four or five years elapsed before the observer's next visit, and then it was not to be heard or seen. A Satin Bower Bird was seen there during the same year.

Concerning *Ephthianura albifrons*, whose nest he regarded as up to that time undescribed, Mr. Dobree wrote (Trans. Roy. Soc. Vict., vol. v., p. 143):—"It may be met with in the dry portions of the swamps extending between the Saltwater

and Yarra Rivers. I discovered its nest about 4 feet from the ground, in a stunted bush, on the edge of a tea-tree scrub which covers part of that locality. The structure is cup-shaped, somewhat deep, and about 4 inches outside diameter; dried fibres, fine twigs, and stalks form the exterior, and the lining is composed of horsehair and fine grasses. It contained three fresh-laid eggs; length, $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch; extreme width, $\frac{1}{32}$ -inch; shape, not much pointed; ground colour white, with fine red-brown markings, consisting of points, streaks, and roundish dots, the larger markings being most abundant at the thicker end, where they form a sort of wreath, while some of the smaller ones are scattered over the other parts of the surface. The markings are, in nearly every case, surrounded by a faint ashy margin of their own colour, imitating the appearance of having been painted on the white ground before the latter had properly dried, thus causing them partially to run into the white surface. This seems to be a decided characteristic in these eggs. The nest was discovered about October."—H. K.

Stray Feathers.

APSOTOCHROMATISM.—Those interested in the discussion which is vexing the souls of contributors to English and American bird magazines as to whether a moult takes place at every seasonal change of plumage, and which has been conducted in some cases under the barbarous heading of "Apsotochromatism" (literally a non-falling-off of colour), may find food for thought in the following incident, recorded in the *Victorian Naturalist* (vol. ix., p. 168), and mentioned originally in a letter to one of the editors of *The Emu*. Mr. E. M. Cornwall, a close observer of birds and their ways, says that a Galah "managed to injure its wings when flapping them, as birds love to do, after a shower. . . . It was soon noticed that the whole of one side of his plumage was becoming of a darker colour, and two days after the injury the pink of the injured side had turned a dark red, and the grey of the back was distinctly darker on that side. . . . The bill also assumed a darker colour on that side." The vane of a feather is usually regarded as physiologically dead, but this occurrence, though an exceptional one, seems to strengthen the argument of those who contend that it is possible for colouring matter to pass from the basal gland throughout the whole structure.

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FOR OBSERVERS.—No detail in bird life is too trivial to be overlooked. All aid to a complete knowledge of its life-history, which is not revealed only in what may be called its public appearances, but in those chapters of its existence when