

tralian wild birds to photograph—a fact that is not so much due to the average situation of the nests as to the restlessness of the owners. Accordingly, the natural zest which attaches to the stalking of a bird with a camera is added to in the case of the *Columbiformes*, and increased further by the exceeding gracefulness of the birds, particularly the crested species, when sitting on the nests. The Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) at home is one of the prettiest avian vignettes one could wish to see; but, personally, I have not been able, with a limited experience of the bird, to do more than photograph a nest of its young. During this week I endeavoured to obtain a pictorial acquaintance with the rarest of the three Doves—*Geopelia humeralis*; but the effort terminated before it was well begun, owing to the excessive shyness of the potential sitter. The nest was found on 2nd August, in a thorny bush on the bank of Norman Creek, in the heart of East Brisbane. It was just the usual flimsy structure of grasses, but interest was added to the discovery by the presence of a second nest immediately adjacent. Each nest contained two eggs, but the set in the lower of the pair was addled, and partly covered with grasses, obviously having been deserted. The Dove flushed strongly at the first footfall, and did not return to the vicinity within two hours. I photographed the two nests without handling the contents of either, and gave the scene a call later in the day. The Dove was sitting again, but she flew immediately, and, from that point, probably did not go near the nest any more, for when I paid another cautious visit on the following day the fresh eggs were cold. A day later there were only a few bits of shell in each nest—some marauder had cleaned out all four.—A. H. CHISHOLM, R.A.O.U. Norman Park, Brisbane, 11/8/17.

Stray Feathers.

Harriers in New Zealand.—I was interested in Mr. Dove's notes on the Harrier in last issue. In New Zealand *Circus gouldi* is the common—almost the only—Hawk. There is a bounty on its destruction in this district, given by the Acclimatization Society, and a patient of mine remarked the other day—"Well, the Hawks' bills have paid the doctor's bill this time," and sure enough he paid me with a cheque of £3 11s., representing 142 beaks. He is a rabbit trapper by occupation, and catches the Hawks in rabbit traps baited with a dead rabbit. Even young (healthy) rabbits seem to have no fear of the Hawks, and I have never seen a Hawk swoop at a rabbit yet; but he tells me they will sometimes attack a baby one, or one in the last stages of death from poisoning. Mostly they feed on dead ones, I fancy. He only trapped a small area, and 142 beaks seem to me an astonishing number for a range of a few hundred acres.—T. J. ICK-HEWINS. Waiuku, N.Z., 4/9/17.

[Why this licensed slaughter?—EDS.]

Nesting of Black-fronted Dottrel.—About the first week in January, 1917, when on the banks of the Yarra River, near Heidelberg, I noticed a pair of Black-fronted Dottrels (*Agialitis melanops*), and, after watching them for some time, saw the female bird approach her nest and sit on the two eggs, which she had left on my arrival. I then took a stand a little distance off, partly hidden from the birds, and noticed the female return to the nest and sit on the eggs for a short time and then leave again. This she did several times; but at other times when she went to the nest she seemed to place a small drop of water on each egg, but did not sit on them when she did that, and when I examined the eggs I noticed the water. This she did on several occasions, and, as the day was very hot and the eggs were exposed to the sun, I was wondering whether the bird moistened the eggs with the idea of better protecting them from the heat of the sun. They were well advanced in incubation. I would be glad to know whether any other bird observer has noticed the same thing. —DONALD THOMSON.

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Magpie-Lark.—Concerning that little favourite, the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*), the following incident may be of interest. Behind my house is a box-tree in which a pair of these beauties build. During the very dry spell last year they used a little puddle-hole near my window for their "pug," which they made from collected grass (very small pieces), and mud, *but only one operated at a time*. The male, carrying his quota of building material, would fly in a bee-line for the nest, and *immediately* on his arrival the female would leave the nest on the other side in such a manner as to give the casual observer the impression that the one bird flew right through the tree and out the other side. My friend, Mr. H. Burrell, considers this to be a means of protective deception on the part of the birds. It certainly seems like it, especially as it was difficult, even at a distance of five yards, to distinguish male from female, owing to their very muddled throats and breasts. I am convinced that the birds understood all the principles of the Monnier system of reinforced cement in mixing the mud with grass.—T. J. REDHEAD. The Vicarage, Manilla, N.S.W., 2/7/17.

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Simulation of Death by the White-eared Honey-eater (*Ptilotis leucotis*).—I was, during the season, greatly interested in the wonderful mimicry of death by a female White-ear at Ferntree Gully. In a dense thicket of dogwood (*Prostanthera lasianthos*) I came across a very deep, cup-shaped nest of this Honey-eater suspended from the frail branches of a dogwood. It was, as usual, beautifully constructed of dry grasses and strips of dry bark, and lined with a very thick mat of black wallaby hair, and contained two young birds, apparently about a couple of days old. Whilst admiring the beautiful cradle, the female flew into

the top of an adjoining dogwood, and, steadying herself by clinging with her feet uppermost to every twig in its line of descent, gradually came to the earth, when it very slowly collapsed upon its side. The feathers of the neck shivered, and then lay quite open and loose, and the brilliant beady eyes nearly closed. Then like a flash she was up and away, but speedily returned, to repeat the same manœuvre over again, until I quietly drew away from the heavily-breathing, naked bird babies in their cosy nest, and left them to their mother's care.—A. CHAS. STONE. South Yarra.

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Warburton Bird Notes.—Yesterday (30th April), at 10.30 a.m., whilst working in my office, I pricked my ears at an unusual bird call outside. Surely a Cuckoo? On going outside, the plaintive trill of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo was heard in all directions, and in the distance the sad note of the Pallid Cuckoo. There must have been at least a dozen Fan-tailed Cuckoos calling, and three were seen in a small tree fronting the road. They were in evidence for about ten minutes, and then all departed as abruptly as they came, and have not been heard or seen since. Doubtless they were on their way back north. On several occasions last week a fluttering at the window announced the visit of a Black-and-White Fantail, apparently desirous of engaging in mortal combat with his own reflection. Butcher-Birds are heard every day. One in particular has a very musical song, which might be attempted in musical notation thus:—



Lyre-Birds are fairly plentiful along the Donna Buang road, and by going quietly one can get quite close to them.—A. E. RODDA. Warburton, 1/5/17.

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Late Migrants in Tasmania.—The following three species of birds, which usually go northward in the autumn, are, in June, still about Hobart, their most southerly range in the Australian Region:—

Australian Curlew (*Numenius cyanopus*, Vieillot) was on the sandy beach of Bellerive this morning (12th June). It is not a good feeding-ground—in fact, a bad one, and the Silver and Pacific Gulls (being too clean) appear to be the only birds which get a living upon it. The two Curlews had probably strayed, as the morning was well shrouded in fog. It is the first morning this winter with a fog and a frost combined. Perhaps the food supply in their familiar grounds had frozen. One of the two birds was calling. This is the month for being well into the breeding period in the tundra of North-East Siberia.

Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus parvirostris*), Gould.—I saw a flock of nine on several occasions on and about 5th June. There were both adult and immature birds, the latter being the young of this summer. The flock was perfectly silent, and was passing amongst the orchard trees and adjacent timber.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*, Latham).—I saw it on 1st June, and recognized it by its flight and markings. It has not been calling for months.

The past few weeks have been mild, and on two occasions only have we had a low temperature. The weather to-day appears to indicate the real winter, and those birds which have been induced to stay because of good climate and abundance of food—if Tasmania ever really has it—may now be sorry for themselves.—ROBERT HALL. Hobart, 12/6/17.

Correspondence.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

DEAR SIRS,—The very valuable article on "Birds of the Rockingham Bay District, North Queensland," by Messrs. A. J. Campbell and H. G. Barnard, in *The Emu*, vol. xvii., p. 2, is to my mind somewhat marred by the controversial tone adopted in reference to the work of Mr. G. M. Mathews. Personally, I think that Mr. Mathews' own great work on "The Birds of Australia" is even more spoilt by this fault, and that a text-book is not the right place in which to embody the controversies of the moment. It will be a great pity if the habit is to spread to all contributions to Australian ornithology. Of course, I do not object to the authors expressing their opinions as to whether particular forms are or are not worthy of specific or sub-specific rank. Such opinions from field workers are of supreme importance, and personally I think that these matters cannot be settled solely by examination of skins, but that the nests, eggs, notes, and other habits of the birds must also be taken into consideration.

Without in any way holding a brief for Mr. Mathews, who is quite capable of fighting his own battles (but, being in England, may not be able to reply in time for the next issue), will you allow me to comment on one point in the article in question?

On page 17 the authors write:—"Bee-eaters have been observed passing to and from New Guinea during migration. How can it be possible, then, that there are two races of these birds in Australia, as Mathews infers?" Again, on page 36, when discussing the Spangled Drongo, they say:—"If this bird migrates from New Guinea (one of us has observed it doing so), why does Mathews make two sub-species of the Drongo—one for Queensland and the other for Northern Territory?"

Mr. Mathews may or may not be right in these cases in separating these migratory birds into sub-species, but the mere fact that they are only summer migrants in Australia, and