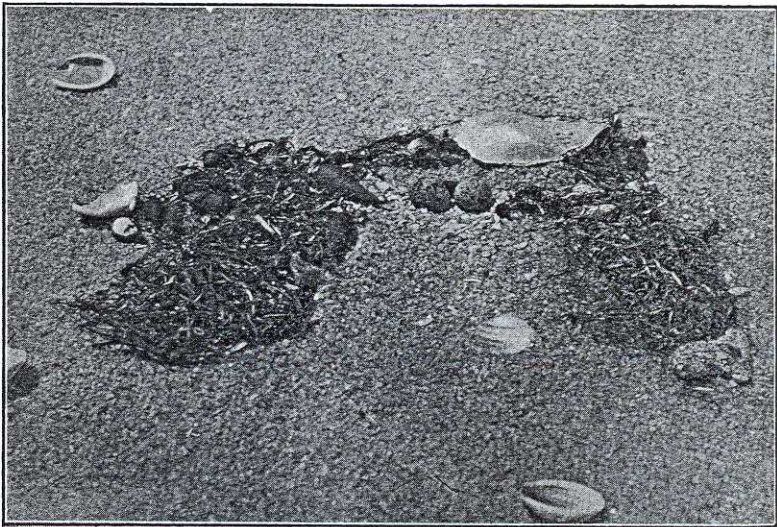


as Kow Swamp. I have sometimes been out in a boat shooting, and, when the first shot was fired, the rising of the birds sounded like thunder, but that was about 20 years ago.—E. R. CALDWELL. "Gilgi," Pampas, Queensland, 3/6/17.

Camera Craft Notes.

Red-capped Dottrel.—It is interesting that the Red-capped Dottrel (*Ægialitis ruficapilla*) always nests, as far as my observation goes, on coarse sand, and just at high-water mark; occasionally a higher wave than usual wets the eggs, but, the sand being so coarse, at once sinks away and no drawback occurs—if it did the eggs would run the risk of being rolled away. I took the accompanying photograph in Tasmania on 23rd November last. It will be noticed how the bird has placed small pieces of white shell alongside the eggs, and the excellent site from a protective point



Nest of Red-capped Dottrel (*Ægialitis ruficapilla*).

PHOTO. BY W. H. D. LE SOUEF, C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U.

of view. Not far away was the nest of the Pied Oyster-catcher (*Hamatopus longirostris*). This bird had made its nest (if nest it can be called) well above high-water mark and on fine sand. I notice that the Black Oyster-catcher (*H. fuliginosus*) usually nests further away from the sea, and on darker material—such as on patches of seaweed, &c.—than the lighter-coloured bird does. The photographs were taken on the same day, on the eastern coast of Tasmania.—W. H. D. LE SOUEF. Melbourne.

Notes on the Coachwhip-Bird.—Our experience of the Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*) has been limited to about the last four seasons—the period during which we have worked the Ferntree Gully district. For the first portion of this time we occupied ourselves in the more open country, and so learnt nothing of the nesting habits of this interesting bird. We saw and heard many of them, however, and made some attempt to satisfy ourselves as to which bird was responsible for the two notes closely following the loud whip-crack.

It was in November, 1915, that we first located a nest near Upwey. It was built about 4 feet from the ground in a tangle of wire-grass, and contained one egg. The birds were in the vicinity, but did not venture very close. Being unfamiliar with their habits, we took the precaution of not disturbing the nest or egg. Examination the next week-end, however, showed the nest deserted. A week or two later, while endeavouring to catch a young Pilot-Bird in the same locality, we roused two well-grown young Whip-Birds with their parents. A long chase, equally divided between Whip-Birds and Pilot-Bird, failed to accomplish either object. A little later we found a nest about a hundred yards from the bottom of a deep gully at Ferny Creek. This nest was also built in wire-grass and contained two eggs. The cameras were set up, but a long wait failed to bring any reward. The birds appeared to take little interest in the welfare of their prospective chicks, and kept well out of sight. We did not again visit this nest, on account of its distance from the house. On the 5th December we located a nest in the Upwey district. It was built in dry bracken, and placed about 5 feet from the ground. As the nest contained two newly-hatched young, the parent birds showed great anxiety, and came to the nest several times while we were close by. Notwithstanding the dulness of the light, which is a serious drawback with our apparatus, we decided to give them a trial. The advent of the camera disturbed them considerably at first, but we were able to make four exposures in the limited time at our disposal. As we expected, however, the pictures obtained were failures, being greatly under-exposed. During the season 1916-17 we spent very little time at the Gully, and succeeded in finding one nest only. This was built in bracken fern in a small dry gully, and was placed only about 18 inches from the ground. The two eggs it contained were quite fresh, and the birds were therefore too unconcerned to give an opportunity for photography. We, however, obtained the accompanying picture of the nest and eggs.

Our next and most successful encounter with this bird was in October of the present season. We had made a trip to Ferntree Gully, intending to devote the whole of our time to the Coachwhip-Bird. About 7.30 one morning we commenced our search along a small creek a quarter of a mile from the house. We watched one pair of birds for some time without result, and in making our way down the gully disturbed another pair within 20 yards of



Nest and Young of the Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*).



Coachwhip-Bird.

the road. The characteristic chuckling note of one bird first drew our attention, and we at once concealed ourselves. Presently the other bird appeared, and the two fed together for a time. Soon we noticed that one bird had again disappeared, and as the male (the remaining bird) had twice emitted his loud whip-note without receiving an answer, we concluded that the female was sitting somewhere in the vicinity. Our sudden issue from concealment roused the female a few yards ahead. Failing to find a nest at the spot, we were in the act of moving on when a faint call arrested our attention. After a few minutes' search, aided by the feeble answers to our imitation of the adult calls, we succeeded in capturing two well-grown chicks. The old birds, becoming very excited, ran and flew around us, uttering harsh cries. After about ten minutes they quietened down and began to collect food.

We had made preparations to photograph the birds in an open space, but it was a considerable time before they could be induced to leave the scrub. When eventually the female gained confidence enough to feed the young, she took advantage of every particle of cover available and carefully avoided the camera. After trying many schemes unsuccessfully we at last conceived the idea of keeping the young ones in the hollow of a stump near by. This made it necessary for the adults to leave the ground to feed them, and, after noting the spot most used by the parents, we focussed the camera on that side of the stump. This proved effective, and we succeeded in exposing six plates. The young were exceedingly quiet, and soon after being caught appeared to take no interest in the proceedings except on the near approach of the adults with food. Even when handled for the purpose of obtaining a picture they could hardly be kept awake. Although we were on the spot for about eight hours, we observed the male to feed the young on two occasions only. Sometimes the male bird transferred food to the female, who in turn fed the young. The male and female invariably searched for food in company, being never more than a few yards apart. This was particularly noticeable when the female appeared near the stump, and we prepared for an exposure. The male would decide at this time to move a few yards off, and the female always followed. Their food was obtained on the ground, and the powerful feet were freely used among the *débris*. Usually the undergrowth near at hand furnished their food supply, but an occasional excursion further afield would keep the pair away as long as a quarter of an hour.

During all our observations we have taken particular notice of the calls of male and female. It appears quite clear that the whip-crack is always emitted by the male. Our observations in 1913 were that in ten instances where male and female were in sight at the same time the whip-crack originated from the male and the two answering notes from the female. In two cases also there were no answering notes to the call of the male. Other

instances where both birds were not in sight appeared to point in the same direction. In 1915 we have notes of four cases where both birds were in sight at the same time. Three times the female answered, and once there was no answer. In six other instances the male only was in sight, and certainly made no answer to his own whip-note. During the present season we have kept notes of seven cases in which both birds were in sight together. In every case the reply was by the female. In four other instances where the male only was in sight there were two answers and two calls unanswered. In no case did the male make the answering call. There have also been occasions where the female was in sight and made the answering notes, but we have not kept a record of these. We have not on any occasion heard the male make the answering notes to his own call, nor the female to make the whip-crack.—R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, R.A.O.U., AND S. A. LAWRENCE, R.A.O.U.

Stray Feathers.

Crows and Sheep.—Is the Crow acquiring the same habit as the New Zealand Kea? This year the Crow has been a terrible scourge among our ewes and lambs, and often before the ewe could get up the Crows had the eyes plucked out and the lamb killed. But another feature has come under my observation lately which has not been noticed in this district before. The Crows actually picked a hole in the sheep's back right into the kidneys to get the fat! This sheep I had to kill, as the poor thing would not have lived much longer. I thought this was an isolated case, but one of my neighbours had three or four, and another one, the Crows doing exactly the same. This would almost point to a time in the near future when the Crow will be as bad as the New Zealand Kea.—JOSEPH A. HILL. Phoracantha, Golton South, *via* Lubeck, Vic. 12/11/17.

* * *

Cuckoo Combinations.—The following rare Cuckoo combinations have been recorded by us:—*Hylacola pyrrhopygia* (two eggs) and *Cacomantis flabelliformis* (one egg), recorded near Sutherland, N.S.W., on 12/8/17; *Falcunculus frontatus* (two eggs) and *Cacomantis flabelliformis* (one egg), recorded at Blacktown, N.S.W., on 13/10/17.—P. A. GILBERT and H. KEANE. Redfern (N.S.W.), 17/11/17.

* * *

Hooded Dottrels.—A male Hooded Dottrel (*Ægialitis cuculata*) was observed on a lonely stretch of sandy beach fronting the ocean, occasionally running in from the water's edge, but generally interested in the results of the receding tide. After