

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.

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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.

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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

forty minutes' watching through glasses from a distant and partly-concealed position, the bird was eventually marked down to a spot on the sand some 15 or 20 yards up and in from the sea. This spot was only reached after the most circuitous and deliberate wandering on the part of the bird, with long pauses, punctuated by occasional jerking and bowing of the body. There were no landmarks in the shape of driftwood or weed by which to identify the situation amongst the rolling, sandy ridges; but, as far as could be definitely ascertained without rising, the bird had settled down into a sitting posture. Before many minutes, a second bird (the female), who had not previously been seen, arrived on the wing, and alighted on the sand a short distance from the male, who immediately rose, flew towards the sea, and recommenced peregrinating near the water's edge. The last-comer, meanwhile, after a short run, shuffled down on the sand, though not exactly where the male had been sitting. On reaching the site two eggs were found, but they were 3 feet apart, one of the two being more elongated and less pyriform than the other. Both the eggs were in an advanced stage of incubation. Were these eggs, evidently the product of this one pair of Hooded Dottrels, ever lying together side by side? The sand-ridges were sufficiently undulating to obviate separation by the force of the wind, and the possibility of human interference may be neglected, the locality being utterly isolated and unfrequented.—HENRY L. COCHRANE, M.B.O.U., Captain R.N. Melbourne, 19/11/17.

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New Cuckoo Foster-Parent.—Last September, at Raak Plains, N.W. Victoria, in company with Mr. A. W. Milligan, I found a nest of *Amytis striatus (howei)* containing an egg of the *Amytis* with one of the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalis*). This *Amytis* has not, I think, been previously recorded as a foster-parent of *C. basalis*. The new set is now incorporated in Mr. H. L. White's oological collection.—F. ERASMUS WILSON. Melbourne, 20/12/17.

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Bee-eaters: Do They Migrate?—In reference to Mathews-Campbell correspondence about the Australian Bee-eater, owing to my extensive field ornithology in South Australia and the central regions, I can say for certain that the *Merops* found in South Australia does *not* migrate to the New Guinea Archipelago, but only shifts about according to food supply.—S. A. WHITE. "Wetunga," Fulham (S.A.), 9/2/18.

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A Swallow Tragedy.—A pair of Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) used to come yearly and rear their brood in our verandah. One season, after the incubation had commenced, I noticed, although

one was always on the nest, there were two flying about; and after a few days, seeing the sitting one always in the same place, I climbed up to examine it, and found that it had been built into the nest, and was dead. The clay was firmly attached on either side across its back. I took the poor little thing and four eggs away; the others then repaired the nest and laid and hatched their brood of four.—(Miss) C. A. LUTTRELL. East Devonport, Tas.

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Nest of *Pardalotus striatus*.—During a holiday sojourn at "The Creel," on the Thredbo River, January, 1917, I observed *P. striatus* breeding in a large company in a bank of the Snowy River. A few yards in from the bank I noted a small bird disappear into a cleft about three feet from the ground, in the trunk of a small snow gum. After hammering for some time on the tree with no result, I sat and waited. Presently *P. striatus* appeared. *P. punctatus* will breed in trees or bank, and *striatus*, as is well known, will do likewise. This one of *P. striatus* is the lowest place of any ever seen by me.—E. A. D'OMBRAIN. Sydney.

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Red-vented Bulbul.—It is interesting that one of our members, Captain N. Conant, should have obtained a specimen of the Red-vented Bulbul, of Burma. The bird was breeding, and its nest and eggs were secured. Those birds have also apparently been seen in Sydney. The bird must have been some time in Victoria, as last year a clutch was evidently hatched in one of the Melbourne suburbs; a specimen was also seen lately at the Melbourne Zoological Gardens. It has a clear, distinct, whistle-like note, is dark greyish in colour, with a black crest and red patch under the tail. But how it should have become acclimatized both in Melbourne and Sydney is a puzzle. Neither of the Zoos has ever imported them.—W. H. D. LE SOUËF.

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The Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*).—In the same tree as White-fronted Herons, 15 miles west of Bendigo, a pair of these dainty birds was sitting. They relieved each other every twenty minutes while sitting. A bird would fly up to the side of the nest, the sitting one get off and fly away, to come back in twenty minutes to sit again. This was carried on all day. It was wonderful how close to the twenty minutes they kept in relieving each other. After the young were hatched they used to take eight-minute spells away from the nest after food. A bird would fly up on to the side of the nest, when the other, if on nest, would get up and fly away for the same spell. One of the birds was always at the nest, either sitting over young or standing on the edge of the nest.—H. W. FORD, R.A.O.U.

Babblers and Sparrows.—Last month my son heard, early in the morning, a company of White-eyebrowed Babblers (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) making a great row outside our back door. On inspection he found that one of their number was up a small gum-tree in which was a Sparrow's nest. The Sparrows were buffeting and scolding the Babbler, but without avail, as he forced his way into the nest, took out a young Sparrow, and tossed it down to the other members of his company below, who then performed a sort of war dance around the victim. So pleased was the bird at the result that he again ascended to the nest, drew forth another fledgeling, and threw it down. Whether it was sheer love of cruelty or retribution for some offensive act or bad language on behalf of the Sparrows it is impossible to say, but undoubtedly while the cruel deed was done by one bird the rest were parties to it, and seemed to find some pleasure and excitement in the proceedings.—EDWIN ASHBY. "Wittunga," Blackwood, South Australia.

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Nesting of White-fronted Herons.—Once we were boring on a creek flat 15 miles west of Bendigo, and near our work was a yellow box tree with a White-fronted Heron's (*Notophox novæ-hollandiæ*), a Magpie-Lark's (*Grallina picata*), and three Spotted-sided Finches' (*Stagonopleura guttata*) nests in it. One of the Finches' nests was just under the Heron's nest. We noted that the Herons, when sitting, relieved each other at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.—that is, in six-hour spells. At 9 a.m. a bird would come to next tree to nest, give a little croak, when the one on nest would get up, walk a few feet, and fly away. Then the other would go on the nest and sit till 3 p.m., when the mate came back and took up the sitting. We were alongside the nesting tree for a fortnight, and noted these actions of the birds daily. It was remarkable how close they kept to 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. in changing. I saw this pair of birds some weeks after with five young ones. I may say we were at work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and do not know how the night sitting was done.—H. W. FORD, R.A.O.U.

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Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*).—Once we were camped on Jackson's Creek, 8 miles south of Ararat, Victoria. It was November when we pitched the three tents alongside an acacia hedge. We saw a party of ten Blue Wrens about the hedge—two full-plumaged males and eight grey birds. A few days after we fixed camp *two pairs* of birds started to build a nest in bushes on side rail of one of the tents, 3 feet from passage into the tent. They finished nest and laid three eggs. Then the *two female* birds took turn about at sitting, and the two full-plumaged males used to feed them. (There is no doubt about this—I saw the females

relieve each other often. The birds were very tame, and came into the tents after flies and crumbs regularly. The non-sitting birds often came on to my bunk, and even on my knees, in tent.) They hatched three young, which were fed regularly by the four birds that were partners at the nest. After the young left the nest two of them were attached to female or grey birds' party, and the other was fed by full-plumaged male. Both the bright blue birds lost their bright colours after a time and got a rusty brown. As to these birds losing the blue plumage, this does not always happen, as I have seen a male keep his colours all the year, but in my opinion this is exceptional.—H. W. FORD, R.A.O.U.

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A Greater Frigate-Bird Obtained in Western Australia.—After stormy weather a female of this species settled on the bank of the Swan River at Perth on 4th May, 1917, and allowed itself to be captured. It was placed in a crate and brought to the Museum, and when approached kept snapping through the bars of its cage with its savage-looking hooked bill. As these sea-birds do not live in captivity, and this was the first bird of the species to be obtained in the State, it was killed, and is now on exhibition in the Museum. The great confusion with regard to the species of Frigate-Birds, which has always existed, has to a large extent been dispelled by Mr. G. M. Mathews's monograph on the genus, published in his "Birds of Australia." This enables us to state with practical certainty that the bird captured at Perth belongs to the form which breeds on Christmas Island, in the Indian Ocean, which Mathews has named *Fregata minor listeri*. (The unfortunate necessity of calling the larger bird *minor* is due to the original naming of the species *Pelecanus minor* by Gmelin.) This was the sub-species included by Mathews in his "Birds of Australia" as the most probable form of the species to occur in Australia. We can now state positively that this form is a member of our avifauna. The colour of the soft parts of the Christmas Island sub-species has not been described. In our specimen the bill was slaty-grey, the feet pale flesh-coloured, and the eyelids bright pink. The Greater Frigate-Bird is stated to occur in Northern Australian seas, but it has not yet been found breeding. Gould added the species to the Australian list, stating that he had received specimens from Torres Strait, and there are birds from that locality in the British Museum. After discussing the records Mathews writes:—"Apparently the large form of *Fregata* is a rare straggler in Australian waters, and I have seen no specimens absolutely procured in Australia." Campbell records the capture of one at Brighton, Port Phillip, Victoria, which is now in the National Museum, Melbourne. It would be of interest if it were examined in connection with Mr. Mathews's monograph to determine whether it is also a specimen of *F. m. listeri*.—W. B. ALEXANDER.