

Swifts and the Weather.—About ten days ago I had occasion to proceed to Tasman Peninsula on a collecting trip for the Museum. As we motored through the Dunalley district large numbers of Swifts (*Chatura caudacuta*) were observed flying very low. Recalling to mind Mr. Stuart Dove's writings concerning Swifts and the weather, I remarked to my companion that, in accordance with the observations of one ornithologist, we might expect a storm. He rather scorned the idea, and pointed to the bright sunshine and other indications which would naturally suggest fine weather. However, the Swifts turned out to be better weather prophets than he anticipated, as, although we commenced work at sunrise the next morning with every prospect of a fine day, at about 11 o'clock a strong southerly wind arose, accompanied by rain. This observation serves to confirm Mr. Dove's remarks.—CLIVE E. LORD. Tasmanian Museum, 3/3/19.

Spine-tailed Swifts.—Mr. W. H. D. Le Souëf writes:—"On 17th March I saw a number of Spine-tailed Swifts, mostly flying high, passing over Melbourne and travelling north, and also, as usual, against a fairly strong north wind. They were evidently migrating."

Mr. J. Cecil Le Souëf noticed large numbers of these fine birds flying north over Koo-wee-rup, near the coast-line of Victoria, on 7th March. These were evidently the same birds as those seen by Mr. Dove two days before.—W. H. D. LE SOUËF.

Notes on Nest and Eggs of Desert Bush-Chat (*Ashbyia lovensis*).

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THE bird was first described by Mr. E. Ashby in *The Emu*, vol. x., page 251; nest and eggs first described by Capt. S. A. White in *The Emu*, vol. xvi., part 3, January, 1917.

Though I have only been collecting since May, 1918, I have always been interested in birds, and knew of the Desert Chat some years ago, but did not know its name until Capt. White asked me to look out for it last year.

The name Desert "Bush"-Chat is rather misleading, for the bird rarely takes to the low bushes, spending most of its time on the ground.

The call of the Desert Chat is rather a plaintive, piping call, but mostly used at breeding time, just before nesting. I have often seen this bird mount high in the air, almost perpendicular, with the same motion of wings as the Song-Lark, but it invariably returns to earth in a falling sort of way to almost the same spot as it left the ground. All the time of ascending it gives a sharp "Whit-whit-whit"; at other times, when calling its mate, it gives a sweetly pretty song.

The bird generally nests after first rains, but also in September.

The clutch in good seasons is mostly three, but in poor years two is the usual setting. On 21st April, 1919, we had a nice rain, which continued on to 22nd April, thus breaking a drought since June, 1918. On 25th April (three days after rain) I was fortunate to find a pair of Chats, their habits leading me to hunt for a nest. I found a round hole scooped out just alongside a small, dry annual salt-bush, depth about 3 inches. Thinking this a start of a nest, I had a look at the spot the following day and found a partly-built nest—some twigs and pieces of wool—but in no way rounded out. I did not think of touching the nest, for I knew from experience that the bird would desert, which I think strange, for they are very trusting birds, and not easily frightened. On the morning of 28th April I again passed the nest, and found it rounded out and like a nest, with a start of lining going on; it appeared to be fine rootlets. I noted both birds carrying, and each, on arrival, built the nest. On 30th April I found the nest completed, but was unable to find birds. On 1st May I again failed to locate birds, and feared they were frightened by my close watch; I had often been within two or three yards whilst they were building. On 2nd May I had another look, and was delighted to see the bird (female) leave the nest quietly when I was about 6 yards away. I found one egg. On 3rd May I again called in at nest, and found two eggs, the bird leaving quietly at my approach. The next day we had three-quarters of an inch of rain, and I was not able to visit the nest; but on the 5th May, at 5 p.m., I visited the nest, and when about 5 yards away the female fluttered off the nest, pretending lameness and flattening itself to the ground within 3 feet of me. I took clutch—two eggs, none having been laid since 8 a.m. on 3rd May. I have noticed previously that the Desert Chat does not pretend lameness unless she is sitting; until a full clutch is laid she only hops out of the nest and stands a few yards away.

The nest and eggs I am sending to the R.A.O.U. collection. The nest is frail; it is composed chiefly of wool at bottom of hole. Lining is of small rootlets or twigs, evidently to keep eggs off the damp wool, which, in event of rain, would absorb the moisture.

Nest situated on open plains, in ground of open, clayey nature. The nest on one side shows a sort of platform; this is on the far side from bush. Rim of nest fully $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch above ground.

Quail.—While cutting his hay with a reaper and binder on his farm at Lardner, our neighbour, Mr. W. B. Hardie, noticed a Quail on the platform canvas above the knife. Later on in the day the man who was stooking the sheaves found a Quail bound to the sheaf with the string around its neck. Upon being released, it flew away, apparently none the worse. Farmers like to see Quail in this district, realizing they are not destructive, and possibly are useful, consequently they find sanctuary on the farms.—C. C. CURRIE. Lardner, Gippsland.