

from the post-office, and this prevented any sudden disturbance from the head centres of civilization, as only two mails a week can reach you. There are numerous rivers and creeks running down the sides of the mountains in these parts of Victoria, all ending in the Murray, and only a short time back they were all stocked with trout; but if some steps are not taken soon to exterminate the Cormorants all the money that has been expended to make this country a good fishing place will have been spent in vain.

Stray Feathers.

Avocets.—I saw a pair of Avocets last week near Mungindi, the only pair I have ever seen in North-West New South Wales.—F. C. MORSE. Coocalla, Garah (N.S.W.), 10/5/19.

* * *

Swifts Drinking.—While driving my wife and family to Armidale (N.S.W.), 23rd December, 1918, we were following the road between Bingara and Bundarra, which in places runs just along the bank of the Gwydir River. We noticed, while passing close to one large water-hole, a number of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chaetura caudacuta*). They were skimming the surface of the water like Swallows, and we could distinctly see them, every now and then, scoop up the water in the same way that a Swallow drinks. It was a very hot day, probably 110° or 112° in the shade, and it was just noon when we noticed the birds drinking.—F. C. MORSE. Coocalla, Garah (N.S.W.), 10/5/19.

* * *

A Mysterious Songster.—Sitting out of doors one evening early in March, at about 9 p.m., I was startled by a delightful bird-carol, evidently high above our heads. It was a very dark, star-lit sky, and a beautifully mild evening; the bird was apparently right above our heads. Mr. Allingham, as well, has heard the bird singing at night, also high overhead. One night, when riding home from a camp out near the Fletcher River, he heard it at intervals for several miles, and wondered if the bird was following his course or if the notes came from different birds. It is some years since I heard a Skylark singing, but the song reminded me of the Skylark's song, with a Canary trill in addition. I shall be glad to know if any of our members know anything of this fairy music-giver.—MRS. A. BLACK. Pajingo Station, via Charters Towers (Q.)

* * *

The Unidentified Petroica.—In the April issue Mr. H. V. Edwards writes of "An Unidentified *Petroica* (Australian Robin)," and adds—"They (the Petroicas) do not breed in immature plumage." His description exactly fits the female and im-

mature male of *P. phænicea*. On 7th October, 1909, at Mumble, near Kow Plains, north-west Victoria, Mr. J. A. Ross and I found a nest of *P. goodenovii* being built. The male was in attendance, and was in immature plumage. Again, at Ferntree Gully, Victoria, on 7th November, 1916, I found a nest of *P. phænicea* built in a cleft of a burnt and charred stump. The female was flushed from the nest, and was at once fed by her mate. The nest contained three eggs slightly incubated, and the male was in immature plumage.—FRANK E. HOWE. Canterbury (Vic.), 11/5/19.

* * *

Flame-breasted Robins.—Several times during the last few years I have been able to note the nesting habits of the Flame-breasted Robin (*Petroica phænicea*) in the highlands of New South Wales. It is interesting to see how friendly this pretty little bird is. At the Kosciusko Hotel, which stands at an elevation of 5,000 feet, in the Monaro district, a pair of Flame-breasts lay every year in an ivy plant growing up a verandah post in the front of the hotel; visitors pass within a few feet of the nest all day long. Close to the town of Kiandra, which is between 4,000 and 5,000 feet elevation, I was camping in a shed on Eight-Mile Dam in December, and a pair of these birds built a nest on a window-sill within a few feet of the head of my bed, and not very far away another pair had a nest on the lee of a large eucalypt. On 20th December, 1914, I noted a pair building in the verandah of the Guy Fawkes Hotel, which is not far west of the Dorrigo Mountains.—A. S. LE SOUTHER, C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U. Zoological Gardens, Sydney, 16/5/19.

* * *

Great Crested (Tippett) Grebes on Port Phillip.—During January and February, while I was staying at South Melbourne, I frequently saw a finely-plumaged specimen of this species between the South Melbourne pier and the baths. It seemed to prefer the shallow water near the shore, where it kept on diving. I timed its performances a number of times with a stop-watch, and found that the period which it stayed under water was very constant, being about 37 seconds, and I never found it exceed 40 seconds. On 23rd March, when on the s.s. *Karmala*, lying at the new railway pier at Port Melbourne, just before sailing, I again saw one of these birds, and thought it was probably my old friend. Soon afterwards, however, a second was observed, and then three more. The five birds were undoubtedly a family party, as one of them—that first observed—was very much darker in colour than the rest on the back and head, and seemed to have a better ruff and crests. The others were presumably birds of the year, or possibly one may have been the female, though I do not think the female is usually noticeably different from the male.—W. B. ALEXANDER. Perth (W.A.), 14/5/19.

Various Strays.—Mr. H. L. White sends a clipping from the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), dated 17/5/19, which states that at Mountain Ash, Mongarlowe, Mr. G. Sharpe shot a monster Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaëtes audax*) which measured 7 feet 8 inches from tip to tip of wings, and weighed 12 lbs. It would have been interesting to know the sex of this bird.

Mr. I. W. De Lancy the other week reported an unusual suburban sight. In a garden at Elsternwick (5 miles from Melbourne) he noticed a White Hawk (*Astur novæ-hollandiæ*) in a pepper-tree, eating a rat.

Mr. Tom Carter, M.B.O.U., writing from Western Australia, states:—"I have described in the *Bull. B.O.C.* a new subspecies of *Stipiturus* (Emu-Wren) from the Maalock country. Mr. Alexander and myself compared a series of each from Dirk Hartog Island, the South-West Coast, and the new bird. It comes midway between the two first named, and all three birds are quite distinct from each other, according to their several localities."—A. J. CAMPBELL.

* * *

The Blackbird in Tasmania.—It may be of interest to place on record some details of the first nest found in our island of the English Blackbird (*Merula merula*). Although discovered a couple of seasons ago, it has been travelling among the ornithologists, and has only lately reached me, having been brought down from Launceston by Mr. H. C. Thompson. The Blackbird in England usually builds of coarse grasses and rootlets, using mud as a lining only, on which is placed a secondary lining of fine grass-stems. The peculiarity of the Tasmanian structure is that it is practically built of mud, that material forming the foundation, sides, and rim, while on the exterior are stuck strips of gum-bark, small twigs, and bits of dry bracken. Inside the deep cup is placed a thick lining of dry gum-leaves, and on this again the secondary fine grass-stem lining. The mud has set almost like cement, and thus the nest has survived its journeyings wonderfully well. The dimensions are:—Outside diameter at rim, 6 inches by 5 inches; inside diameter at rim, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches; total depth outside, 5 inches; depth egg-cavity, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The nest was found in the vicinity of Russell's Plains, a few miles from Launceston, by Mr. F. Claridge, and when visited on 4th December, 1916, contained four eggs, which were quite warm, but Messrs. Thompson and Claridge could not obtain a sight of the bird. Since then, however, a pair of Blackbirds has been seen by the owner of the Queecchy estate, near Launceston. The structure was placed about 7 feet from the ground in a fork of prickly wattle (*Acacia verticillata*), the mud of the foundation projecting between the branches of the fork.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S. West Devonport (Tas.), 5/5/19.

* * *

Pelicans in a Thunderstorm.—During the afternoon of 28th February, 1919, this district was visited by a terrific thunder-

storm; although less than an inch of rain fell, the lightning was unusually vivid. The following afternoon I went for a ride through some of my paddocks. My boundary-rider, who had seen me going out in a certain direction, that evening asked me if I had seen some very large birds in a certain paddock that afternoon. I said, "No; what were they?" He said, "I do not know; they are strangers to me. I have never seen anything like them before in my life. There were about twenty of them walking about the Palmer Paddock flat, but I could not get nearer than about 300 yards, when they flew up and settled on the stony hills. I followed them up to have another look at them, but before I could get near enough to see them properly they flew further up the hills and settled again, so I left them." I asked him what they were like, and he said, "Something like a Goose, with a white breast, light grey back, long legs, a bill like a Goose, but a little longer." I said, "They must be Native Companions." He then said, "No; I know those birds." However, I went to have a look next morning, but could see nothing of them. While riding home the following evening, and when within about 300 yards of my house, I saw this man standing in the stable yard, with some large bird in his arms, flapping its wings. When I rode up I found him with a Pelican. I said to him, "Wherever did you get that?" He said, "This is one of the birds I was telling you about." I said to him, "But how did you catch it; could it not fly?" He said, "Yes, one of my dogs hunted it up from somewhere—I did not notice where—and it flew up on to the stony hills and settled, and I sneaked up pretty close to it, then made a rush at it, and caught it before it could get properly going on the wing." I cut the bird's wing and put it in a dam near my house, where there was about two feet of water. It is still there (30/5/19) and doing well. Although I have seen Pelicans here when the lagoons and swamps are full of water, I never expected to see them here during such a protracted drought as the country was suffering from at that time; all the lagoons and swamps had been practically dry for many months. So it is quite likely these Pelicans were affected by the lightning, and, although they could fly, they were unable to do so for more than a short distance for a couple of days; by that time they had all recovered sufficiently to depart, excepting this one bird. No dead Pelicans or even their feathers have been found in the paddock, so it is probable that the birds were only slightly dazed, and none killed.—THOS. P. AUSTIN. Cobborah Estate, Cobborah, N.S.W.

Camera Craft Notes.

IN the last number of the *Emu* the photograph of the two *Podargus* was not successfully reproduced. The present illustration should be referred to instead of the one on Plate XLIX. (vol. 308).—W. H. D. LE SOUËF.