

Camera Craft

The Variegated Wren. —During last season I found four nests of the Variegated or Lambert's Wren (*Malurus lamberti*), but did not succeed in getting any pictures of the occupants of the first three. All the nests were built in grass from four to eight inches from the ground in open, scrubby situations.

The first nest was noted on August 6th, being then about half built. I observed the female pulling the bark off a tea-tree and tracked her to the nest. After building the nest, the birds were a long time laying the eggs; it was not until August 23rd that three eggs were noted. A few days later, disaster overcame the nest, and I found it partly broken down and the eggs missing. At the time I attributed this to boys.

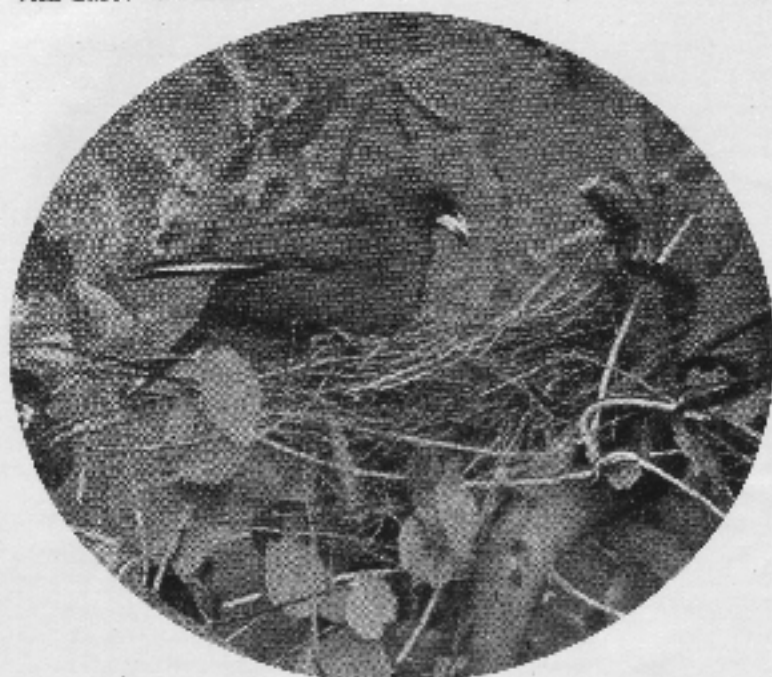
About September 23rd I found a pair commencing nest-building, and in less than a week the nest contained three eggs. The same fate overcame this nest as the first, for, on visiting it one day I found the hood of the nest forced back and the eggs missing. However, at the bottom of the nest were pieces of egg shell, so apparently it had been robbed by some animal. Probably the same cause accounted for the disappearance of the eggs in the first nest.

On the 24th September, while taking the photo of a Pardalote (Diamond-bird), I noticed a pair of Lambert's Wrens building within five yards of me. A Bronze Cuckoo also found the nest and visited it twice while I was there. I focussed on the nest in the hope of its return, but I saw no more of it. On October 6th, the nest contained four eggs of the wren and one of the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*). On October 17th, the cuckoo was hatched out, and in due course the eggs of the wren were ejected. On October 21st, I went to photograph the birds, but was deeply disappointed to find the cuckoo dead beneath the nest. I have not the slightest idea what happened to it, unless it climbed to the entrance and fell out, for the wrens certainly could not have thrown it out.



Photo. by Norman C. Carter, R.A.O.U.

Variegated Wrens (*Malurus lamberti*); left, male; right, female.



Dusky Wood-Swallow on Nest

Photo by L. G. Chandler, R.A.C.U.



White and black boys at nest of Brolga, or Native Companion.

Photo. by Mrs. Adam Black, R.A.C.U.

I had better luck with nest number four, and secured several pictures. The nest was prettily situated at the foot of a small dwarf apple tree (*Angophora*), amongst a tangle of grass and tiny flannel flowers (*Actinotus minor*). The birds soon became very tame, and hardly took any notice of me. For most of the photos the shutter was released by hand at a distance of about three feet from the nest. Both birds often gave voice to their song, a rather unmusical rattling call quite unlike that of the common Blue Wren. They had the characteristic mouse-like creep of the common bird when alarmed for the safety of the nest. It was indeed a privilege to be able to observe so beautiful a bird at such close quarters. The female can readily be distinguished from the common Blue Wren by the much longer and darker coloured tail and the more distinct reddish brown colour round the eye. Both birds were kept busy feeding the three hungry young birds.—NORMAN CHAFFER, R.A.O.U., Wiltoughby, N.S.W.

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Wood-Swallow Notes.—The various species of Wood-swallows that breed in Victoria are, as a rule, rather wary, when confronted with a camera. The Dusky Wood-swallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*) is probably the easiest to approach, although I recall specimens of this species that refused to face a camera. The bird in the illustration was quite tame, and left the nest only for short periods, when her mate appeared with food. On a few occasions he fed her on the nest, but would not pose. The utter disregard of the camera that was exhibited by the sitting bird was not shared by him. In the majority of cases among wild birds, it is noticed that the female bird is more venturesome, and shows a braver attitude in visiting the nest or feeding the young in face of apparent danger.—L. G. CHANDLER, R.A.O.U., Red Cliffs, Vic.

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North Queensland Notes.—The accompanying snap photo. is typical of the way Native Companions (*Brolgas*) nest in North Queensland, in a depression that fills and forms a swamp in the wet season; it has been used for many years by a pair. The water was not more than a foot deep surrounding the tree, not shown to the right, from which the branches had fallen, and where the water was shallower. The boys are also typical of North Queensland, a white and a black. This black boy is the only aboriginal on our station, a little orphan that I have taken care of and reared from almost infancy.

These birds evidently consider themselves competent to take care of their nest, as they do not trouble to conceal it. We went quite close to the nest (about a chain) at the water's edge, and the parent birds went only a few yards away, even while the children were there, and the photographer waded in and took the photo.

We have an unusual number of birds about our home and garden, owing to the dry time we are still enduring, but the only new birds are a family of about 30 Apostle-birds (Gray Jumper) that come to sleep in a Tamarind and Burdekin Plum trees that grow quite close to our house buildings. Previous to this year we knew of them only, some 45 miles from here. White-winged Chough are always about, and in bad insect dry years come regularly to hunt through the mulching under our citrus trees for beetles, etc.

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In the article in last *Emu* (*ante*, p. 3), on the subject of the **White Goshawk** (*Astur nova-hollandiae*), mention was made of the fact that up to the time no plate of the bird had been taken. Mr. S. W. Jackson has since, by exercising great patience, ob-



tained a very good snapshot, which accompanies this note. A hole was cut in the wire netting, and the camera focussed on the feeding spot. For two days the bird refused to leave its high perch, but at length hunger compelled it to give a good pose. At times, in certain lights, I fancy I can see a tinge of yellow appearing in the iris.—HENRY L. WHITE, Belltrees, N.S.W., 5th Sept., 1923.

Many people in the town of Charters Towers are complaining of the damage to gardens by flocks of birds that go in pairs and dig up seedlings, etc. I could not approach them closely, but think they are Pied **Bell**-Magpies. There are magnificent weeping figs all over the town, and perhaps the fruits on them have induced the birds to stay, and, of course, they see and help themselves to other food.—MRS. ADAM BLACK, Pajingo, *via* Charters Towns, Q.

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The estate of the late Mr. J. E. Chubb, R.A.O.U., contains some useful photographic material—dishes, large dark-room lantern, chemicals, etc., besides a camera in good order. Any young beginner, or other photographer, who would like to acquire the same, at much reduced **price**, may apply to the Editors, *The Emu*.
