



Grey Butcher-bird (*Cracticus leucogaster*) at nest.

Photo. by L. G. Cladler, R.A.O.U.

## Camera Craft

**The Grey Butcher-bird.**—I often wonder what songbird would be classed as Australia's best if members of the R.A.O.U. and kindred societies were to vote upon the subject. At present I champion the cause of the Grey Butcher-bird as Victoria's premier song-bird. Apart from certain harsh hunting notes, the varied notes of this bird are exceedingly sweet. Butcher-birds are common at Red Cliffs (N.W. Vic.), and in the spring of 1922 I spent several hours with my camera taking pictures of the birds "at home." The nest was situated in the fork of a Mallee-gum (*Eucalyptus*) about twelve feet from the ground, and for convenience in working I carried to the spot a pair of steps. An uninitiated person chancing to meet a stranger in dense Mallee-scrub struggling under the burden of a camera, tripod and steps, not to mention sundry ropes, field-glasses and tomahawk strung about his person, may have had cause for alarm. Fortunately, the Butcher-birds chose to accept such an apparition as part of the scenery, and, after a little preliminary fussing, went about their domestic duties quite unconcerned. A quaint and pleasing habit of fluffing the feathers and jerking the head while singing is characteristic of this species. Both sexes assist in feeding the young, and the male is very attentive to his mate, frequently feeding her while she is on the nest. At times when he approaches with food she will leave the nest and meet him. The offering is accepted with quivering wings and querulous cry, after the manner of a young bird. Dragon-flies figure largely in the diet of the nestling, and one of my photographs shows the bird with a dragon-fly in its beak. While very young, the nestlings appear to be fed entirely on an insect diet. I hoped to visit this nest later and obtain photographic records and notes of the food supplied to the young when fully fledged, but it proved to be my first and last opportunity for the season to go "bush" with the camera.—L. G. CHANDLER, R.A.O.U., Red Cliffs.

**The Efficiency of Camouflage.**—I think most Australian bird photographers have so little leisure to devote to the hobby that the practice of anything in the way of elaborate camouflage is out of the question. Personally, I find that my photography is confined to a little more than one half-day a week, and that, if I spent much time in erecting hiding tents, and so on, the day would be almost spent before I had made an exposure. Recently, however, I have disguised the camera somewhat, and have noted the results carefully. My first plan, that of fastening suitable foliage, by means of rings, to the green focussing cloth, appeared to give no advantage worth mentioning. In fact, the drooping of the wilted leaves over the lens accounted for more than one failure. I am also convinced that covering the nickel and brass fittings on the camera front had little effect on

the trustfulness of the subjects. The necessary bending aside of branches around the nest disturbs some birds, but I am certain that the stare of the lens is the most fruitful cause of long waits and bitter disappointments. After long observation, I have come to the conclusion that it is the moving reflection of the bird itself in the lens which attracts its attention, and so often causes a perceptible "shock" when the subject first approaches the point overlooked by the camera. Unfortunately, the lens is the one portion of the apparatus which cannot be disguised efficiently. Nevertheless, it is possible to effect some little disguise by fitting a cylindrical hood over the lens mount, and allowing it to project as far as is possible without cutting off the corners of the picture. I had proof of the advantage of the hood when Mr. Lawrence and I spent half of one miserable, stormy day in attempting to photograph the Crested Shrike-Tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*). One of the party had captured a well-grown young bird high up in the trees, and we imprisoned him on the ground beneath a small sapling. Mr. Lawrence focussed his camera upon one outstanding branch, while I used another. For hours, the birds flew back and forth, until eventually, the male bird ventured into our sapling. Two or three times he hopped in the direction of Mr. Lawrence's branch, but changed his mind suddenly when he saw the lens, which was without a hood. On each occasion he used the only other suitable branch, which was mine. He could not see my lens until he was actually perched before it. When he did see it he left hurriedly. Twice he beat me, but once I was too quick for him. These were the only chances he gave, and circumstances combined to prevent the picture from being a good one. I shall be interested to learn from other photographers the extent to which they have used camouflage, and the measure of benefit they have derived from it.—R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.

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**Southern Warbler.**—Some weeks ago, whilst searching for nesting birds at Flora Hill, on the outskirts of Bendigo, I was attracted by the strange but rather pleasing song of a bird new to me. I experienced some difficulty in locating the singer, but later found it to be the Southern Warbler (*Gerygone olivacea*). After several visits to the locality I discovered that there was a pair of birds, and at length observed them carrying nesting material. The rapidity with which they darted from tree to tree, however, made them difficult to follow, and their inconspicuous colour added to my difficulties.

Eventually I discovered the nest about three feet from the ground in a Eucalyptus bush. It was hanging from a fork at the extreme end of a branch, and was not then completed. The nest was built in the shape of a long oval with a tail beneath.



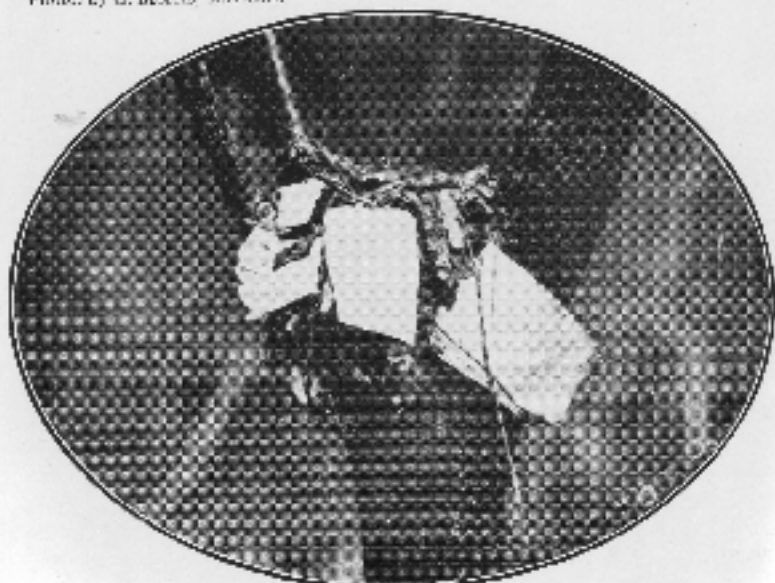
The Crested Shrikebird (male).  
Photo. by R. T. Lindjell, R.A.O.N.



Little Grassbird at Nest.  
Photo. by Mary Cahn, R.A.O.N.



White-bellied or Southern Warbler feeding young Cuckoo.  
Photo. by G. Morris, R.A.O.U.



Nest of Yellow Robin, showing an unusual camouflage. Note the pieces  
of newspaper suspended from the nest.  
Photo. by Norman Chaffin, R.A.O.U.

material used was for the most part fine brownish-coloured bark, while the cocoons of spiders were fastened to the outside. Feathers were used as lining.

Along with the three eggs of the Warbler was one of a Cuckoo, and the young Cuckoo was the sole survivor when I next visited the nest. I was able to secure a picture of this young bird being fed by its foster-parents.

The birds I found most difficult to photograph because of the rapidity of their movements. In time they became accustomed to my presence, and allowed me to approach within a few feet of them at the nest.—G. MORRIS, R.A.O.U., Quarry Hill, Bendigo.

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**Unusual Nest of the Yellow Robin.** — This curious nest of the Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) nest was found by Mr. H. Wolstenholme, R.A.O.U., near his home at Wahroonga, Sydney. It was placed on a sheoak (*Casuarina*) quite close to a much used beach, and was very conspicuous. Evidently, in this case, the pieces of newspaper hanging around the nest were used more for ornament than camouflage. The paper was placed on the one side only, the other side having the usual strips of bark suspended from it.

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**The Little Grass-bird.** — Early in October, 1921, while photographing Reed-Warblers on an island in Lake Weerona, Bendigo, I was puzzled by a monotonous whistle. I looked towards the bank of the lake several times for the small boy I felt sure was there.

In November, 1922, I heard the same whistle again, but this time traced it to a bird, which I had mistaken for a sparrow, although its smaller size, habit of flying low, and rapid movements of the wings puzzled me. It was the Little Grass-bird (*Megalurus gramineus*) of the accompanying photograph.

On several occasions I watched this bird from the bank of the lake. When I mimicked its call, it would answer and fly into a tree near me. It seemed to visit one clump of Pampas grass more than any other, and eventually my patience was rewarded by seeing it carry three duck's feathers to this clump. I rowed to the island, where I easily found the nest, which contained three young birds.

Owing to poor light, I paid several visits to the island before I secured a good photograph.

The young ones were reared, and the parents built another nest about a foot from the previous site. By Christmas Day the second brood was hatched, and I was fortunate in securing better pictures than previously.—MARC COHN, R.A.O.U., Bendigo.