

be very fond of the Scotch thistle seeds. We noticed small parties of 4 or 5, and often a single pair, of those beautiful Parrakeets known to the settlers as Green Leeks (*Polytelis barrabandi*) nearly always on the wing, and travelling very swiftly from the river outback. We came to the conclusion that they were returning to some feeding-ground after watering at the river. This surmise proved correct, for we drove out into the back country, and, calling at a settler's home, we were informed that some very pretty birds were destroying his crops. Sure enough, a flock of between 20 and 30 Green Leeks was busy amongst the standing wheat, which at this time was ripening. I believe that these birds are becoming very scarce in districts where they once were numerous. A few specimens of the Red-vented Parrakeet (*P. hæmatorrhous*) were noted, and I was told that they nest in the district. I was shown a young bird in captivity which had been taken from the nest by an aborigine. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was met with all along the river, and we saw the Spur-winged Plover. Large flocks of Maned Geese were also seen on the river. Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut-breasted Teal, Marsh Terns, White-faced Herons, Pacific Herons, Cranes, and Emus were all observed in the marshy country. Crows were everywhere. White-backed Magpies were fairly plentiful, and Noisy Miners were seen in almost every tree. The Friar-Bird (*Tropidorhynchus corniculatus*) was noticed on the tops of some of the high gum-trees. Out on the plains we saw the White-fronted Ephthianura, and we were told that *E. tricolor* was often seen there. The Pied Fantail (*Rhipidura tricolor*) and the Welcome Swallow were observed round the homestead. We were only in this fertile country for three days, and every hour of that time was well occupied.

Stray Feathers.

The Dottrel (*Peltohyas australis*) in Riverina.—I have observed many Dottrel nests here since 1909, and have taken particular notice of them all. I have never seen any with five eggs. All except one nest contained three eggs, and one nest contained four. The Dottrel seems to have no particular breeding season here. I occasionally drop on their nests all through the year. Their principal enemy here is the fox, owing to the birds making their nests on the ground.—L. K. TURNER. Booligal, 14/2/11.

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Stilts Breeding near Melbourne.—I saw some nests and eggs lately of the White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) in a swamp 6 miles from Melbourne, and obtained a fine clutch of five eggs, two nests, and four young birds (about a week old) for the National Museum. The Curator, Mr. J. A. Kershaw, intends having a life-group made of these. The birds, I learn, have been

breeding since end of September, and are now finished. The swamp is now nearly dry.—C. FRENCH, JUN. Melbourne, 13/12/11

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Distribution of Black-fronted Dottrel (*Ægialitis melanops*).—A specimen in the flesh was secured in Southern Tasmania (Sandford) on 20th October, 1911. This appears to be the second record of the species having been secured in Tasmania, and observed so far south. Mr. W. Richardson, who forwarded the specimen per Mr. W. L. May, also secured the first find in the same locality about 1900. Mr. W. L. Butler handled a specimen secured in 1906 at the Ouse, in the Midlands. The weather and food conditions of this spring are favourable to the wide extension of the geographical range.—ROBERT HALL. Hobart, 23/10/11.

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Description of Eggs of *Myzantha melanotis* (Emu, vol. xi., p. 124).—Form oval, texture fine, surface glossy, colour reddish-buff, thickly dotted with small reddish-brown (terra-cotta) spots, more numerous at larger end. Dimensions of a clutch in inches:—(1) 1.01 x .72, (2) 1.08 x .72, (3) 1.04 x .75. In my collection is another clutch, in which the spots are fewer over the greater surface of the eggs, but at the larger end are darker and thickly clustered in a zone. Dimensions in inches:—(1) 1.03 x .7, (2) 1.11 x .7. I have known of five clutches of this species, four of which contained two eggs each and the other three eggs.—J. A. ROSS. Malvern (Vic.), 18/10/11.

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New Foster Parents for Fan-tailed Cuckoo.—I have to report two new foster parents to the eggs of *Cuculus flabelliformis* (Fan-tailed Cuckoo). (1) At Kow Plains, North-Western Victoria, I flushed a sitting *Hylacola cauta* from her nest, which contained two eggs of the Ground-Wren and one of the Cuckoo. Date, 30th August, 1911. Incubation, fresh. (2) At Blackburn, Victoria, Master Ray Tregellas found a nest of *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* containing two eggs of the Tit and one of the Cuckoo. The nest was in a gum sapling, 6 feet from the ground, and the eggs were quite fresh. Date, 28th October, 1911.—F. E. HOWE. Canterbury (Vic.), 30/11/11.

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Another New Foster Parent for Fan-tailed Cuckoo.—On the 5th of November, 1911, at Beaconsfield, Victoria, I found a nest of the Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*), containing two eggs of the foster parent and one of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, all of which were fresh. This is, I believe, a hitherto unrecorded foster parent to the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cuculus flabelliformis*).—F. ERASMUS WILSON Melbourne, 12/12/11.

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The Oriole as a Mimic.—It may not be generally known that the Oriole is a capable mimic. A few mornings ago an Oriole (*O. affinis*) treated us to a display of its powers, which proved it

a fit rival to any Bower-Bird. Just about sunrise, when we were sitting at our breakfast round the camp fire, the bird came, and the entertainment only ceased when we had to leave the camp. The calls most easily identified and perfectly rendered were those of the Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black-backed Magpie, Butcher-Bird, Blue-faced and other Honey-eaters, and Red-breasted Babbler; but his repertoire embraced several other birds, which the Oriole was apparently only learning, and could not render aright.—ERNEST D. BARNARD. Kurrajong, via Gladstone (Q.), 23/9/11.

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Birds Killed by Lightning.—*Apropos* of the remarkable discovery lately in the Northern Territory of a cave containing the remains of 40 or 50 aborigines, supposed to have been killed by a flash of lightning (however, other causes may be assigned for this native holocaust), the following incident may be of interest:—Some years ago our member, Mr. H. L. White, was travelling along the Braidwood road, about 2 miles out of Goulburn, when a heavy thunderstorm came up, and he saw a flash of lightning pass through a large flock of Ibis (*Carphibis spinipectus*), killing 30 of the unfortunate birds. It is the first time I have known of such an event having been observed. Ibis, like most Waders, fly in a fairly compact company, which will account for the heavy mortality.—D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne.

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New Eggs from the Mallee District, Victoria.—Appended are the descriptions of the eggs of two new sub-species, according to Mr. Gregory Mathews, of Australian birds:—

Diaphorillas striatus howei.—Clutch two to three; texture of shell fine and glossy, and the colour pure white, with small spots of reddish-brown and lilac fairly distributed, but inclined to a zone about the larger end. Measurement in inches:—(1) .81 x .6, (2) .81 x .61. This pair I took myself from a nest in a small bunch of porcupine grass. Locality, Kow Plains, Victoria.

Podargus rossi.—Clutch two, elliptical in shape, colour pure white; texture of shell fairly coarse and glossy, and is very minutely pitted. Measurements in inches:—(1) 1.7 x 1.23, (2) 1.73 x 1.19. Taken by myself at Underbool, North-Western Victoria. Another set measures—(1) 1.64 x 1.2, (2) 1.59 x 1.23.—F. E. HOWE. Canterbury (Vic.), 10/12/11.

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Swallows Nesting on Railway Train.—There have been recorded some curious nesting-places for the Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), but I do not recollect a moving train being mentioned. Recently, Mr. Brown, fireman, at the station (Somerville) drew my attention to a Swallow's nest built on the iron framework on the under part of a carriage (second class portion). I felt the inside of the nest, which was warm and contained five eggs. The train is in motion twice a day—from Stony Point to Mornington Junction and back (15 miles each way). Occasionally the train goes on to

Mornington (additional 8 miles each way). Mr. Brown informed me that the Swallows took about five weeks building their nest, which was probably chiefly constructed at the Mornington Junction terminus. He did not notice the birds always following the train, but they appeared to join at various places *en route*.—G. E. SHEPHERD. Somerville, 9/12/11.

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Re-discovery of *Pachycephala rufogularis* (Gould).—One hot day in November last Mrs. White and I were working the dense mallee scrub 40 miles east of the River Murray. Attracted by a call which we had never heard before, we came upon two male Thick-heads fighting and calling loudly. The call, once heard, will never be forgotten—it is so unlike that of any other bird. The first note is a loud, clear whistle; the next note follows quickly, and resembles the noise produced by the drawing-in of the breath between partially-closed lips. Later in the day we secured a female. It is the opinion of some ornithologists, I believe, that the bird in question is the immature *P. gilberti*. I am positive this is not the case, for both the males I secured were mature birds in every respect. I cannot think for a moment that the lores, which are a reddish-brown, would change to black, as they are in *P. gilberti*; lastly, Gould had ample material to compare these birds, and he would not make a mistake of this kind. Evidently John Gould met with this bird in fair numbers in the bush near Adelaide over 70 years ago, but, strange to say, it has not been met with since.—S. A. WHITE. Wetunga, S.A., 2/12/11.

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Notes from Belltrees (N.S.W.)—I saw for the first time, on 10th October, a pair of Little Whimbrel (*Mesoscolopax minutus*) in our neighbourhood. They were not at all timid.

The majority of our migratory visitors returned to us much earlier this year than in 1910 and 1909—in fact, this applies to practically all save the Wood-Swallows (*Artami*), who were only 8 days earlier than in the previous two years. Another noticeable feature is the comparative scarcity of the flocks in comparison with those of the two preceding years. This was very marked in the case of all the flocks of Wood-Swallows. It would be interesting to know if the same applies to other localities. Rufous Song-Larks (*Cinchorhamphus rufescens*) were very few this year. Coincident with the above notes it may be added that all our local birds nested from three weeks to a month earlier than in former years. This was very noticeable in the case of the Parrots and the Thickheads (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), the former laying a month earlier and the latter 23 days. These cases refer to birds that breed beside my house in the same spot each year.

White-fronted Heron (*Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ*).—For some time I have been observing a pair of these birds for further notes on their habits, and I noticed the following little incident—an unrecorded trait, I think.—The two birds were in a shallow pool

about 6 inches deep, and were vigorously at work over their morning meal. With one of their long legs they would disturb the bed of the pool, and for the next few moments their heads would be very busy. Apparently the object was to disturb the larvæ and such like at the bed of the pool, and then promptly catch them.—S. A. HANSCOMBE. State School, Belltrees (N.S.W.), 20/II/II.

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Near Broken Hill (N.S.W.)—I have just been out back for about three weeks, with indifferent success from an observer's point of view. I saw one nest only of the Grey Falcon (*Falco hypoleucus*), and that contained young birds. I saw several pairs of Black Falcons (*F. subniger*), but no nest. However, I found three nests of the Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*), the first that I have observed. Chats (*Ephthianura*) were far less common than usual, hardly any Song-Larks (*Cinclorhamphus*), and most of the smaller birds had bred early. Whistling Eagles and Allied Kites were in far greater numbers than I had ever seen them before. I could easily have taken 50 or 60 clutches of the former had I bothered to do so. Goshawks (*Astur approximans*) were also common. All had clutches of three eggs except one of four, which were just hatching. My old Buzzard (*Gypoictinia*) had deserted its former site, but I found another nest with two eggs just hatching. When I peeped over the edge I got rather a start, as several young Parrots (*Barnardius barnardi*) flew out of a hollow just beneath the Buzzard's nest. Langawirra Lake held more water than usual, and presented many beautiful views, as all the marginal trees were standing in water. It was pretty cold, too, wading from tree to tree, with an occasional immersion up to the neck, searching for Ducks' nests. Red-kneed Dottrel (*Erythrogonys*) were numerous and all paired, but not breeding. One day, when driving a four-horse team through a scrubby part, eight Emus (*Dromæus*) came out to look at us. When we pulled up, these fine creatures came and made a thorough inspection of the horses and trap, coming within five yards of us, and did not mind my getting out of the trap for a nearer view. What a snapshot for a camera man, I thought!—(DR.) W. MACGILLIVRAY. Broken Hill, N.S.W., 6/IO/II.

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Descriptions of Nests and Eggs from Cape York.—*Ninox peninsularis* (Cape York Owl).—Set of two taken by Mr. W. M'Lennan near Piara, Cape York, on 6th August, 1911.

Eggs.—Rounded oval in form, close-grained, smooth, and slightly lustrous, measuring—(1) 44 mm. x 38 mm., (2) 45 mm. x 38 mm. Mr. M'Lennan's field-note:—"About four miles from Piara, on the Lockerbie track, I flushed an Owl (*N. peninsularis*) from the branches of a Moreton Bay ash; flushed another from a hollow in a tree close by. Nest contained two eggs. Hollow in a big wart, 40 feet from the ground, 18 inches in diameter, 13 inches in

depth. The bird that flushed from the nest appeared to be the smaller of the two, probably the male. Tree, a Moreton Bay ash."

Ptilotis cockerelli (Cockerell Honey-eater).—Eggs.—Clutch, two, taken near the Jardine River, Cape York, on 10th May, 1911, by Mr. W. M'Lennan. Oval in form, close in grain, smooth, and slightly lustrous; ground colour pale pinkish-white, sparingly dotted with irregular spots and markings of reddish-brown, which are gathered at the larger end to form a zone, almost obscuring the ground colour. In this zone are a few underlying spots of a purplish hue. A second set showed much variation, one specimen being almost pure white in colour, with a very glossy surface and a small band of faint chestnut-red spots at the larger end, the other having a ground colour of a rich salmon, sparingly spotted with spots and blotches over two-thirds of the surface, and forming a distinct zone, almost covering the larger end.

Nest.—Cup-shaped (not pensile), but supported in a terminal, horizontal branchlet of "tea-tree." Composed almost wholly of very fine grass stems and the hair-like stems of some other plant, all beautifully interwoven, but admitting of perfect ventilation. A very few silky threads of cobweb are used here and there to bind it together. Mr. M'Lennan's note reads as follows:—"Twenty-two mile camp, near Jardine River, Cape York. Went through swamp near camp; found a *Ptilotis cockerelli* nest, two fresh eggs, in a small tea-tree bush 18 inches from the ground. Nest sent for description and identification; shot the female."

Pacilodryas pulverulenta (White-tailed Shrike-Robin).—Mr. W. M'Lennan discovered this rare species building in the fork of a mangrove tree near Piara, Cape York, on the 22/9/11, and took the nest and pair of eggs on 2/10/11, the eggs being then somewhat incubated. These specimens appear similar to nest and eggs of this species described by Mr. H. L. White from the North-West coast in *The Emu*, vol. x., p. 132. The following is Mr. M'Lennan's field note:—"Went on to the nest of *P. pulverulenta* found building on the 22nd September. The female was sitting on the nest, so I sat down and watched her for about 1½ hours; she left the nest three times, and returned each time within a couple of minutes, and occasionally uttered a short, low whistle. The male did not put in an appearance, but I heard him call once some distance away from the nest. I imitated the call, and he came along to see what was the matter, but soon left again."—(DR.) W. MACGILLIVRAY. Broken Hill, N.S.W., 6/10/11.

Bird Day.—The importance of Bird Day in most of the State schools of the Commonwealth needs a special notice. This has been unavoidably held over, together with an engraving of the certificate of the Gould League of New South Wales, till the next issue of *The Emu*.