

however, as regard total length, bill, tarsi, tail, and wings, and its very slender tarsi and very short, fine bill, at once distinguish it from *Acanthiza mathewsi*. The sexes can be distinguished only by dissection. The measurements in millimetres of a series of two adult males and one adult female are as follow:—

		Total Length.			Wing.		Culmen.		Tarsus.
(a)	♂	...	90	...	51	...	8	...	17
(b)	♂	...	92	...	49	...	8	...	17
(c)	♀	...	88	...	51	...	8	...	18

Bill and feet black. Irides brown.

Type, Belltrees collection.

Field Notes on the Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).

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(Read at the Launceston Session, R.A.O.U., 18/11/12).

EMU-WRENS (*Stipiturus malachurus*) are fairly common in the Springfield (Tas.) district. As a general rule, each pair of birds has its own haunt throughout the year; but I have seen as many as five Wrens together in the autumn. Probably three were the young of the last season, which had not been driven away by their parents. The rustling noise which these birds make when creeping through the rushes betrays them long before their "Tit-like" call is heard. When feeding quietly together their twittering notes resemble those of the *Acanthiza*, but the song of the male is a feeble edition of the *Maluri* notes. The warning call, again, is similar to that of the Tasmanian *Acanthiza*.

This season (1912) I have made some rather interesting notes regarding the Emu-Wrens. The female, as far as I have observed, does all the work of nest-building, gathering and arranging the material. Generally speaking, she is a slow builder if it be the first nest of the season which she is constructing. If she has lost her first nest she rebuilds and has a completed clutch of eggs in a fortnight's time. The male follows the female as she collects the grass and other material, and flies with her towards the nesting-site, but does not assist her. The female rolls the grass or other material into a neat bundle, and does not have it hanging loosely from her beak. She drops into the centre of a tussock, and emerges from one side, repeating the action in tussock after tussock until the chosen one is reached. With two exceptions the nests found or observed by me this year were placed in sword-grass tussocks, right down in the centre or just at the side. The principal grass used in the construction of the nests was meadow-fog, which is soft and pliable. Some of the nests had a capping of green moss. One was warmly lined with fur, and several were made cosy with feathers. The nest cavity was shallow, except in one instance, where the nest was built among reeds growing

in deep water. The female lays one egg each day, and sits on the day when the last egg is deposited.

If disturbed while brooding, the female drops from the nest after the manner of a fledgling, and secretes herself in the nearest tussock. However, if the observer remains quiet she soon returns and enters the nest again. Emu-Wrens take no notice of the human voice; it is movement which they distrust. On 31st August, 1912, I saw a female Emu-Wren, carrying material in her beak, disappear in a large clump of coarse rushes, locally named "wild pampas." I could not find the nest then, nor on a second visit a week later. On the evening of 19th October I disturbed the birds near the same spot, and judged by their actions that they had fledglings somewhere. I was unable to stay, but early next morning my sister and I cycled to the swampy creek. Shortly afterwards we saw the male Wren fly from the bank with an insect in his bill. He disappeared in the same rushes. I left my sister to watch, while I examined a nest of Lewin's Rail (*Hypotaenidia brachypus*). The female Emu-Wren flitted past me, carrying food. I returned to the bog where I had left my sister. She reported that the male bird had disappeared and returned again, this time carrying a spider. The birds now became aware of our presence, and made a great commotion. The male appeared to decide that all was well, and entered into a sword-grass tussock. Then we heard young ones crying. The male flew away. The female, after feeding the young birds, also left.

After some trouble, we found the nest. It was situated in a small tussock near several larger clumps on the edge of a sheep-track running through the bog. The young birds were about a week old. They kept their eyes closed. The feathers were showing on the wings, displacing the long blackish hairs or down. The fledglings paid no attention when a hand was held above them; but instantly the reeds rustled they became alert. The parent birds soon returned, and crept to within a few inches of us. The female, whose beak already held insects, began picking scale off the reeds without losing any of her former captives. On making a second visit to the locality we found that the male bird had gained more confidence; he fed two of the fledglings.

Next evening I watched the birds for a while from my seat on a tree-fern stump a foot or two from the nest. The male appeared first, bringing in his beak a brown moth nearly as big as himself. But he saw the camera, which I had not had time to conceal. Round and round he hopped, up and down the rushes, across the sheep-track, and up to the nest. An hour elapsed before he fed one of the fledglings, and departed in search of more food. The female, meanwhile, had shown no fear except for a few minutes. She fed her young ones freely, each in turn. On the reeds near me she found a soft-bodied, greyish-coloured insect, which she seized and popped into a little beak. I examined the fledglings. Their eyes were wide open. The feathers were

developing on other parts of the body as well as the wings, and the bluish and rufous tinges were showing on throat and chest respectively. Two days afterwards I again visited the nest; it was empty. A little later I saw the young birds being fed by their parents.

On 29th September the nest (partly built) of another pair of Emu-Wrens was found in a sword-grass tussock on the edge of a swampy creek. By 19th October it contained one egg; but the owners subsequently deserted the nest, owing, perhaps, to the presence of some fencers who were working near. On 17th October I cycled to the Brid River flats to look at an Emu-Wren's nest, which had been found by one of my scouts. The nest was placed in the favourite grass against a log lying in a swampy creek which flowed into the river. The female emerged as I walked along the log, and secreted herself in the next tussock. I followed her, and she flitted to the lowest twig of an aster bush. Thus I was able to fully identify her. Two weeks previously I had discovered what was evidently the first nest of this pair of birds. The swamp in which it was situated was the scene of a fire, and the nest was burnt. Subsequently nests were found on 19th and 30th October. The former contained three fresh eggs, and was built in round reeds in the bed of a creek. One nest, discovered on 30th October, contained two eggs; it was built at the base of thick round reeds. On 5th October an Emu-Wren (female) was noted collecting material from the bank. On 24th October my scout found the nest, which was nearly finished, by observing the female carrying material. The nest contained three eggs by 30th October. It is worth mentioning that this swamp was burnt out by the farmer who owned it.

The nesting season of the Emu-Wren is more extended than is generally supposed, nests with full clutches of fresh eggs having been found on 6th, 7th, and 20th November. On the latter date a nest containing two eggs and a nest partly built were also noted. Pairs of birds have been seen in October with their young flying around them. The markings of the eggs vary somewhat. There is generally an odd one in the set. Following out some directions which I had given to her, my scout, on 29th October, succeeded in finding the home of another pair of birds. It contained two young ones, just hatched. They were naked; eyes closed. Four days afterwards greyish-black down was observed on wings, head, and part of back. The feathers were just showing on the wings. When next I visited the spot I found the young birds lying dead in the nest, with their backs torn.

Lady Collector.—Permission has been granted by the Commonwealth Government to Miss Audrey Chirnside, of Melbourne, to export specimens of birds, &c., collected by her in the several States for the Natural History section of the British Museum, London.