

blackish-brown, each feather having a stripe of pale cream down the centre. The feathers have a softer and more silky appearance than in the adult bird, and also are lighter on the whole beneath than the full-plumaged female. Iris brown; bill horn; feet light horn.

Cuckoos and their Offspring.

By S. A. HANSCOMBE, R.A.O.U. (SEAHAM, N.S.W.)

ON 28th October, after many days' observations, I succeeded in locating a well-hidden nest of a pair of Buff-tailed Tit-Warblers (*Acanthiza reguloides*). They had successfully eluded me for some days, though I was aware that they had completed their nest. Profiting by earlier experiences, I engaged in observations in the early morning, and found the nest. Many times I had rested beside it. It was safely hidden on the top rail of a paling fence, the paling and the rail holding it securely from wind or weather, while, overhanging the whole, was a large chaff-bag closely fitting over the paling and sapling. The fence was part of the remains of a deserted bush home, and here the old bag had hung for many months.

The opening to the nest was very small, but on inspection one egg was to be seen. On the evening of 29th another egg was there, and on the 30th the nest also held an egg of the Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx plagusius*). There were now certainly only two eggs of *A. reguloides*, and no evidence of any egg having been displaced, but this could have happened, as a colony of ants, a few feet distant, could readily account for the destruction of eggs ejected from the nest.

From further observations I concluded that the parent birds were at work incubating. On 13th November the egg of the intruder had hatched, and the little naked bird was a ball of activity. On the 14th November the other two eggs were still unhatched, but on the 15th both had disappeared. I could see no trace of shell and none of young birds, save the rapidly improving *C. plagusius*. Whether, in its blind twistings and rollings about for food, the latter had ejected either two eggs or two nestlings, I cannot say. Probably the eggs were ejected as "addled" specimens by the birds themselves, as to me it appeared too difficult a task for the young bird to perform. The position of the entrance to the nest leads me to this conclusion. The young Cuckoo grew very rapidly. Two adult Bronze-Cuckoos were always in the immediate neighbourhood, though they certainly never took part in supplying food to the fledgeling. The Tit-Warblers fed the alien with great care and attention till about 9 a.m., when visits slackened, to be renewed again at about 2 p.m., and continue well on to 5 p.m. In ten days the bird had grown wonderfully, and was well plumed, when an accident

put a sudden stop to my observations. Young bird and nest were carried off by some intruder, and, judging by the marks and scratchings, I would say that it was a wild cat.

This incident I much regretted, as I was desirous of observing whether the adult Cuckoos would, after a time, claim the young bird and prepare it for the migratory flight. I might add that since the 25th November, when the nest was destroyed, I have not seen either of the birds.

It fell to my share some years ago, at Belltrees, to watch a similar case in regard to the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*). The parent birds did certainly claim the young bird after it was well able to fly, and daily thereafter assisted the foster-parents to feed it.

Cuckoos—Ejection of Foster-Parents' Chicks.

BY A. G. CAMPBELL (KILSYTH, VIC.)

I HAVE been privileged to have under observation in the Kilsyth district (Vic.) two nests containing Cuckoos' eggs, and to see the ejection of the eggs or nestlings by the young Cuckoo.

In the first week in September, 1913, a nest of the Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica leggit*) was discovered, situated in a pear-tree. It contained two eggs of the Robin and one egg of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*). One morning the Cuckoo was found hatched, and on the ground beneath the nest lay a dead nestling of the Robin and an egg. Though the exact time of the Cuckoo hatching was not determined by a close watch, yet it was clearly in advance of the Robin's chicks. It appeared to be about 48 hours old when first seen. When the egg and dead Robin nestling were returned to the nest the young Cuckoo immediately proceeded to its tactics, and in the space of about a minute and a half had hoisted them over the side. This was repeated again and again until, at the end of five minutes, the Cuckoo gave up, either in disgust or exhaustion. The procedure was the same in each instance. The young Cuckoo edged round with its back to the object, and, by a wriggling motion, got its merithorp underneath, hoisting the unfortunate nest-mate on its back, where it was held in the cavity, supported by the shoulders on two sides and the merithorp on the third. The next move was for the Cuckoo to raise itself on its legs against the side of the nest, using its beak as a prop in the bottom; its wings, circling backward like arms, clasped the sides of the nest to assist in the leverage. The bird's body gradually rose to the level of the rim of the nest, and its burden was cast over.

This was a most uncanny display of instinct in a blind, naked, and seemingly helpless nestling. To make sure that its evil work was complete, the Cuckoo invariably paused for several seconds in the final position, though in apparent danger of toppling out backward itself, its "arms" firmly clutching the rim of the nest