

formis, generally arrive at the same time, but these were three weeks later this year, not appearing till about the second week in August. This last week the Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx plagosus*) has been calling from the hedges.

Contrary to the general rule, the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus melanops*) was the first of the migratory birds to be noted this year. As a rule it is the last. Possibly these early individuals may have wintered on some part of the coast.

The profusion of flowering heaths and shrubs and grass-trees, and the presence of the giant banksia on the barren ranges known as The Sisters Hills, attract the various members of the Honey-eater family; but, as I intend to deal with the birds of that locality in a separate paper later on, I will only stay now to mention that during the winter, while the tree-lucernes are in flower, the school-ground is melodious with the calls of *Ptilotis flavigula*, *Lichmera australasiana*, *Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*—the two latter even flying into the schoolroom. This year, for a fortnight, a solitary Yellow Wattle-Bird (*Anthochaera inauris*) lived amongst the flowering lucernes; he was the first of his kind I had noted during my two years' residence here. Strange to say, I have not yet seen them on the banksian tracts of the hills, though in the Midlands every clump has its pair.

Throughout the year the Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus dubius*) is a visitor to the flowers in the garden.

I had almost forgotten the beautiful little frequenter of the banks of the rivers, the Blue Kingfisher (*Alcyon azurea*), which is to be seen along the Flowerdale River.

Occasionally a pair of Sea-Eagles (*Haliæetus leucosternus*) fly upwards from their haunt a few miles further west, where they have their eyrie in a tall tree on the side of a wooded hill which runs sheer to the sea, and from which they have a fine outlook over the waters of Bass Strait.

A Trip in Search of the Spotted Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis maculata*) and the Little Wattle-Bird (*Anellobia lunulata*).

BY C. L. E. ORTON, R.A.O.U., PETWORTH PARK, MOORA (W.A.)

ON the 15th August, 1917, Mr. Phil. Sandland and myself made a journey into the sand plain country about 25 miles north-west of Moora, Western Australia, where I knew the *Sericornis* had previously nested, having three clutches of eggs given me by a friend who flushed the bird from the nest when riding through the low scrub. He found two nests in the middle of July, and the other about the end of September, evidently being the second clutch for the season.

In our drive across the sand-plain bird-life was very scarce:

Hooded Robins, Crested Bell-Birds, Wood-Swallows, and Fulvous-fronted Honey-eaters only were noted. When about 20 miles out the sand-plain changes slightly, and distinct flats, with a reed growing amongst the scrub, occur. The flats are evidently the home of the *Sericornis*. Mr. Sandland took the east side of the track and I took the west when arriving at the Mithawandry Well. I had not gone more than 200 yards when I detected a sharp note of a bird new to me, and in attempting to get a look at the owner two young birds just fledged hopped out from under my feet. I stood still, when immediately an adult *Sericornis* made its appearance on a twig only 10 yards away, and gave me a good view of its spotted throat and light-coloured breast. It gave a few sharp notes, which at once drew the fledgelings to it, and then, just behind me, the male bird broke into song, resembling very much that of the Redthroat (*Sericornis brunnea*), only a little louder and of shorter duration. After watching them for some time I felt confident we were too late for their eggs; although walking about, I did not see any others. On reaching the buggy I found that Mr. Sandland had also heard the male bird, but could not get even a momentary glance at it; it is evidently one of our shyest scrub birds. As it was getting near sundown, and several miles to where we wished to camp, we reluctantly pushed on.

Our camp was situated on the edge of the sand-plain where the coastal thicket and red gum country starts. At break of day next morning one of the first birds to greet us with a gurgling note was the Little Wattle-Bird. Two years previously I had taken a nest within a stone's throw of our camp; so we made an early start, and had not gone far when we flushed a Little Wattle-Bird from its nest. The nest, containing one young one, just hatched, was situated about 7 feet from the ground in the centre of a parasitical growth on a banksia. The two nests previously found were also in parasitical growths in stinkwood trees. We immediately searched through the thickets, but without success. We noted the Banded Wren and Western Scarlet-breasted Robin, but they had only just started to nest.

The second day we made for Talala swamps, in the centre of the sand-plain country, and searched for *Sericornis*, without success, and on reaching Talala it was one sheet of shallow water, and simply teeming with Teal and Black Duck; but we were hoping to get the Parrots *Barnardius semitorquatus* and *Psephotus multicolor* in the flood gums surrounding the swamp. Although we tapped practically every tree, the only timber growing of any size, and Mr. Sandland climbed several trees which the Parrots had bitten round the holes, we concluded we were a fortnight too early, and we returned to camp wet through, having taken only a Baudin's Black Cockatoo, a Teal, and a Black Duck's nest.

The third morning we started for a point where I had seen a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest on two occasions previously. On the way we searched for *Anellobia*, without success. On reaching the red gum timber I heard Mr. Sandland "coo-ee." He saw the

Eagle leaving its nest, and within a short time, with the help of a rope ladder, my friend called down from 70 feet up that the nest contained a pair of well-marked eggs.

We had decided to start for home that evening, but on reaching camp Mr. Cook, who was leasing the country, rode up and persuaded us to return on the following day, which we luckily decided to do. In the morning we started off solely in search of *Anellobia* in different directions, and I had not gone far when I heard one gurgling, and saw it chase a Singing Honey-eater from a kaufi thicket; it then sat and preened its feathers, and after a diligent search I found its nest ready for eggs. Hearing some birds farther away, I located the thicket they were in, and was following them up when I ran into Mr. Sandland, who was also after them. I found an old nest, and in the next bush was a new nest, containing the single egg, and not 50 yards away Mr. Sandland called out, and he had another nest (one egg), only 3 feet from the ground, in some red gum suckers. Our luck had changed, and before reaching camp I found in another thicket a nest with one half-incubated egg, which had been deserted. Every nest we found was lined with the dead woolly flower of the banksia, and not large enough to hold two eggs, being about the size of a nest of a Wood-Swallow (*Artamus cinereus*). In the afternoon we started for home, allowing two hours to try to secure a specimen of the *Sericornis* where we had seen them, but we could not see or hear one.

I am sure the vast sand-plains have many rare birds hidden away, as only three years ago, a few miles north, I saw the Lesser Bristle-Bird (*Sphenura littoralis*) in a thick mallee thicket. Although I have made many trips over the sand-plain country and thickets between Wongan Hills and the coast, I have never seen or heard *Psophodes nigrogularis*, yet this is the country where Gilbert first found the bird. We hope at some future date, with more time at our disposal, to make a more thorough search.

Cormorants: Are They Pests or Otherwise?

By W. T. FORSTER, LOCAL SECRETARY TO THE R.A.O.U. IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

AFTER reading the article appearing in the April number of *The Emu* * by Captain S. A. White, entitled "Further Notes on Cormorants, Their Food, Temperatures, &c.," it occurred to me that a few observations made by me during a period of nearly sixty years might be of some interest to the readers of *The Emu*, and perhaps throw some additional light on the subject of the dietary of the Cormorant.

Captain White's observations are, no doubt, of great value,

* *Emu*, vol. xvii., page 214.