

Migrants in 1930

By H. STUART DOVE, R.A.O.U., Devonport, Tas.

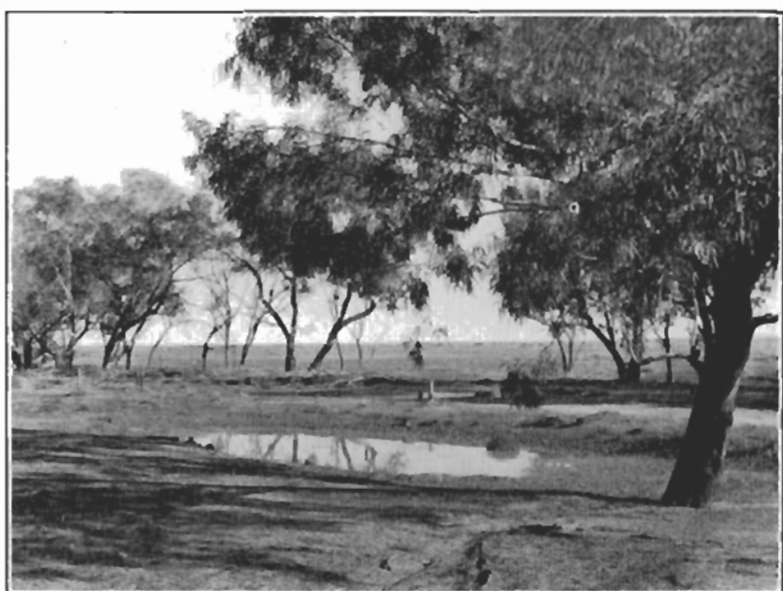
Shortly before sunset on February 26, 1930, a Spine-tailed Swift (*Hirundapus caudacutus*), the first seen that summer, was observed flying towards the north at a height of about 200 feet. Shortly afterwards two more were seen heading towards the south-east at about the same height. The evening was fine and calm. The next evening "Tree-Diamonds" (*Pardalotus affinis*) were heard calling in a eucalypt close to the cottage, evidently on their return to the coast after nesting inland.

At Mersey Bluff, on March 13, at 5 p.m., numbers of Spine-tailed Swifts were coursing over the scrub at heights varying from 6 feet to 60 feet. The evening was overcast and sultry after rain the previous night. On the way home, more of these birds were seen circling up aloft to 300 feet or so. Three days afterwards, a large number of these Swifts passed over the Don Road at 5.30 p.m., at heights of from 200 to 300 feet, heading north-west, as if on migration. That evening and the following day were fine, with a light north-west breeze, but on the morning of March 18 there was rain, accompanied by squally-looking clouds.

On April 5 there were still one or two pairs of Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) at Burnie and Devonport, and plenty of Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) in the Boat Harbour district, near Wynyard.

A solitary Spine-tailed Swift passed towards the north in the evening of April 8, which was cloudy, but fine. When I went through the Wesley Vale and Moriarty districts on April 13, a fine warm day, there were still numbers of Wood-Swallows (*A. cyanopterus*) about. On April 5, when motoring through Myalla, about 12 miles inland from Wynyard, a Pipit or two (*Anthus australis*) was noted by the wayside. On April 21, while motoring through Wesley Vale, a few miles east of Devonport, on a warm, sunny day, it was noticed that the Wood-Swallows still remained.

A Summer-Bird (*Coracina novæ-hollandiæ*) was noted on June 21, a fine, sunny day, flying across a paddock in the Devonport town boundary; evidently one of the few individuals which winter here. I have never heard any call from this species during the winter months. On July 18, a pair of Welcome Swallows appeared in the town. A pair or two of these birds, like the Cuckoo-Shrike, seem to stay in the district the year through. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) was heard trilling on the outskirts of Devonport on July 13, and on July 29 a "Yellow-tail" (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) was trilling a sweet little ditty from an overhead wire. A striated Field-Wren (*Calamanthus fuliginosus*) was heard singing from the show-



A watering place of Flock Pigeons.



At a Flock Pigeon's nest—about 4 miles from nearest water.

Photos. by D. W. Gaukrodger, R.A.O.U.



Photo. by D. W. Gauchrodter, R.A.O.U. Flock Pigeon (*Heterophaps histrionica*).

ground fence on August 14, while on August 18 a pair of Cuckoo-Shrikes was seen at East Devonport.

The migratory Welcome Swallows began to return on August 23, while on September 12 the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) was calling, and on September 15 a pair of Pipits was noticed in fine plumage by the roadside. Five days later the Bronze Cuckoo—*Chalcites basalis*, probably—was heard, and the same morning, which was sunny and warm, a friend in Devonport showed me a beautiful specimen of that bird, which had been killed by a motor at Spreyton, three miles away. The children who picked it up said there were five of the birds in the party, which had probably just come over Bass Straits, and were fatigued in consequence.

On September 26 a party of about thirty Orange-breasted Grass-Parrots (*Neophema chrysogaster*) was resting in a grass paddock in Devonport, about a mile from the sea. Seemingly, they had just crossed from the mainland. Some were snuggled down in the grass, others were sitting on the fence rails close to the posts, where they were sheltered from the cool south wind. They remained in this paddock three days before moving inland. A smaller party was noted near the same place last spring (*The Emu*, Vol. XXIX, p. 194)—on that occasion I was not sure of the species, but this time I was close enough to see the orange patch on the abdomen.

Nest of Flock Pigeon.—The Flock Pigeon (*Histriophaps histrionica*) is very rare in Western Queensland nowadays, and was for many years thought to be extinct, but according to my enquiries they still exist in the Northern Territory. They made a reappearance about two years ago, when the accompanying photographs were taken on Westhill Holding, on the Upper Barcoo, and some were observed as far in as Charleville, on the Warrego. It is a beautiful and plump bird, as will be seen by the photograph, and it is a great pity that it elects to keep so much in the back country. It is of a soft brown colour, with crown and throat black, and white patches about the head and throat, as shown. The bird nests out on the open downs, and its eggs are similar to those of most other Pigeons. There is scarcely any semblance of a nest—merely a few dried stalks of grass trampled down to the bare black soil. From the nesting and feeding ground, it retires early in the evening daily, usually to a waterhole on the edge of a gully, and surrounded by coolibah timber. The food is grass seeds. It flies very swiftly and in large flocks, and alights on the water's edge and takes in water almost instantly.—DAVID W. GAUK-RODGER, Hamilton, Brisbane, Qld.