

Food of the Red-Capped Parrot

(*Purpureicephalus spurius*).

By J. NEIL McGILP, R.A.O.U., Adelaide, S.A.

In *The Emu*, Vol. XXIX W. B. Alexander, M.A., R.A.O.U., in giving some very interesting comments on the food of this beautiful Parrot recalls to mind my first and only experience with this fine bird. It was during the R.A.O.U. camp-out held at Yallingup, Western Australia, in October, 1920. After lunch at the Hostel on October 25, 1920, Mr. J. W. Lindo and the writer went in an easterly direction into some red gum country. Many small birds and also a pair of nesting Butcher-Birds were noted but very little of interest was seen in over two hours' ramble in the timber. Just as we were turning homeward a single male Red-capped Parrot was noticed feeding on the ground at some distance from us. Much care was taken in crawling through the short undergrowth and we were able to get up to within 15 yards without disturbing the bird, although it had undoubtedly noticed our approach. We sat down and by the aid of glasses watched the Parrot very closely for fully half an hour, during which time it was never more than 50 yards away, and on one occasion within 10 yards. We noticed that the "Red-cap" or "King," as it is locally called, spent the whole of the time hunting for and feeding upon the green seed pods of the red gums that had fallen to the ground. It was interesting to watch the bird as it searched for the seed cases containing seeds. When one was found it was held up from the ground in the bird's claw while its long bill was used to extract the seeds. On other occasions the seed pod was held on the ground by one claw while the bird took up different positions to secure its food.

My companion and I thought we could see an action of disgust and impatience when an empty case was lifted from the ground. The bird must have secured between 20 to 30 pods containing seeds, and during the period of observation it did not eat anything else. Several times as the bird walked towards us it moved its head from side to side, as if in some doubt as to our intention, which was excusable, as we had a gun with us. The bird made no call during our observation.

Having spent the half hour or so in observation and anticipation of its calling to its mate, which we suspected of being in one of the many hollow limbs in the vicinity, we decided to disturb the bird in the hope of it going to or calling its mate from the nesting hollow, but when hunted up it flew into a red gum close at hand and commenced eating off the seed-cases, which it immediately dropped to the ground. No effort was made whilst the bird was in the

tree to extract the seeds. Presumably it was providing a further food supply. After a few minutes the bird was again disturbed, and it flew right away from the locality. After searching amid the big timber, tapping all suitable hollow spouts for some time, and as the male bird did not return, we decided that there was no nest there, so wended our way homeward.

The Catbird

By NORMAN CHAFFER, R.A.O.U., Roseville, N.S.W.

Along the eastern coast of Australia the rich soil and heavy rainfall supports a dense type of vegetation, usually referred to as jungle. A large number of trees such as *Eugenia* bear a profusion of berries which largely form the food supply of a number of birds. Quite a few of these birds are strictly limited to this jungle country. Particularly so in this respect is the Catbird (*Ailurædus crassirostris*).

The Catbird would not be so well known among casual observers were it not for its peculiar cat-like calls. These strange wailing notes, so unlike those of any of the surrounding birds, immediately arrest attention. During the brighter hours of the day the birds mostly move about quietly among the dense vegetation. At dusk they become considerably animated, and it is then their strange meowing cry is heard at its best. I have noticed that the birds of National Park are much quieter than those farther north. The bird is yellowish green on the breast spotted with white, and the wings and back are bright green spotted also with white. Owing to the general green colouration and quiet habits of the bird it is not readily seen. At a casual glance it may easily be mistaken for its relative, the green "Satin Bird," but the brighter green and larger size readily identify it. The "Satin Bird" too is much more alert than the Catbird, the movements of which are rather clumsy.

The nest, a substantial bowl-shaped structure, is composed of sticks and vine tendrils, among which are woven large numbers of flat leaves. Vine tendrils chiefly are used for lining the nest. Two cream-coloured eggs constitute the setting. The nest is frequently constructed in the middle of a thick creeper-covered tree but may also be placed among the fronds of a tree fern, the top of a bird's nest fern, or in a more or less open fork. I have seen nests at heights varying from 7 to 40 feet from the ground. The thickest part of the jungle is usually chosen for the nesting site.

Photographs of a nest and eggs were taken on October 20, 1930, at Lilydale, a little south of Sydney. The nest, located by Mr. Jack Marshall, was placed in a typical situa-