

there were about two hundred in a flock that came under his notice, and when surrounding a single branch, heads inwards and tips of wings and tails outwards, they formed a frill-like mass resembling an orchid growth—a remarkable sight. Another swarm on the side of a tree which came under his notice was about the size and shape of a big dish cover. When swarming, they always have a bird on guard, and when frightened they disperse with a great noise, like a mild clap of thunder. This swarming is supposed to take place to keep the birds warm, and sometimes after the birds have flown some of their number may be found dead on the ground. This is such a remarkable thing for birds to do that one wonders if the birds could possibly have learnt this swarming habit from the bees themselves.

A good deal has been written about "the blueys," as these birds are sometimes called. They are certainly a fascinating study, intensely interesting, and worthy of all the study one has time to give them.—(MISS) M. L. WIGAN, R.A.O.U., Vic.

Yellow-tailed Thornbills.—During the spring and early summer of 1930, I had several nests of Yellow-tailed Thornbills under observation and was surprised to find that the one bird not only used one nest a second time, but also some birds had made a clever attempt to defeat the Bronze Cuckoo, which was very active at the time, and had even placed its eggs in some nests very early in August. I saw one young Cuckoo, nearly full-grown, being fed by Thornbills on September 11. Later I noted a Thornbill's nest that evidently had been built to confuse the Cuckoo, of which I will give detail further on.

Two others had been sealed. One had two Thornbill's eggs in it, but was abandoned after the entrance had been closed, following an unsuccessful attempt by a Cuckoo to place its egg in the nest (it evidently having been disturbed before laying its egg). The other had the entrance to the lower part of the nest sealed. In this part were three Thornbill's eggs and one egg of the Bronze Cuckoo. Evidently the Cuckoo had been disturbed after placing its egg in the nest and before it had removed any of the Thornbill's eggs. The upper part of the nest had been completed and when found contained three fresh Thornbill's eggs.

The following are taken from my note-book:—On August 15 a pair of Yellow-tailed Thornbills commenced building their nest in dry bean vines in my garden in an exposed position. The materials used were grass, leaves, rag, string, and bark. The outside of the nest was decorated with spider cocoons, paper, and small pieces of rag. The inside was well lined with feathers.

The entrance, made lower than usual, had a fan-shaped hood concealing it—at that time the upper part of the nest was covered by an arch forming a tunnel. At the end of August three eggs were laid. These eggs were duly hatched, and the three young safely reared.

When the female commenced sitting the male started to complete the upper nest, and by the time the eggs were hatched the nest was completed and lined with feathers. It had then three entrance holes, each one inch across. Two of these were later closed, the female assisting with the work. The upper nest was then as complete as the lower one.

On September 30 the young had left the nest, which was immediately wrecked by some bird or other animal. Had the nest not been interfered with, I feel sure that the birds would have used it for their second brood. Later these birds built a second nest, which was a normal one, ten feet from the first. This was well concealed among the thick leaves of a loganberry vine. In it a second brood of three young was reared without interference.—E. A. R. LORD, R.A.O.U., Murphy's Creek.

State Branches Reports

NEW SOUTH WALES.

The activities of the Ornithological Section of the Royal Zoological Society of N.S.W., of which Society most Sydney members of the R.A.O.U. are members, during the past year (July, 1930-June, 1931), have been both interesting and instructive to members. Meetings were well attended, and the lecturing and subjects were much appreciated. Accurate field work, especially by many of the younger workers, was a feature of the year. The privilege of using the cottage at Gundamaian was not availed of to the fullest extent; but the bird cabin at Waterfall has been in constant use, and the observations from that station have amply justified its existence. To Mr. R. Gannon congratulations are offered for his notes on the Satin Bower-bird and its method of painting the bower. Other members also obtained records of interest concerning this remarkable species. His Excellency the Governor, Sir Philip Game, and party spent an enjoyable week in the park, under the guidance of Mr. Chisholm and others.

The death of one of Australia's ornithologists, Mr. Harry Wolstenholme, was a severe loss to the section. Mr. Wolstenholme's wonderful gift of taming wild birds was well-known to those members who visited his home at Wahroonga. His work in connection with the R.A.O.U. Checklist and his scholarly treatise on the scientific names of