

## Movements of Species of *Petroica* in Queensland

By W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A., M.B.O.U., C.F.A.O.U.,  
England.

It was with some surprise that I read in Mr. F. E. Howe's "Observations on the Genus *Petroica*" (*The Emu*, XXXII., p. 41) "that *P. multicolor*, *P. goodenovii*, and *P. rosea* are stationary, more particularly the last-named."

My knowledge of the Rose Robin (*P. rosea*) is confined to its appearance in the coastal districts of southern Queensland in the neighbourhood of Brisbane. There I met with this charming little bird in the winters of 1921, 1923, and 1925 in the months of June, July and August on seven different occasions in various localities. This seems to me strong evidence that near Brisbane the species is a winter visitor only.

In the coastal districts of central Queensland the Red-capped Robin (*P. goodenovii*) is undoubtedly a winter migrant only. During the period in which I was living at Westwood, 30 miles inland from Rockhampton, I noted its appearances as follows. In 1922 a single cock bird was seen on March 21. On April 7 two birds in female or immature plumage were seen, and one or more, possibly the same individuals, were seen, on April 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, and 30 near my house. On April 12, 17, and 25 other birds of the species were seen in various localities some miles apart. Throughout May and June and the first half of July Red-capped Robins were common all over the district, birds in immature or female plumage predominating, but adult males being frequent. After mid-July females were only seen on July 21 and August 6, whilst males were noted on July 20, 21, 24, 30, and 31, and August 4, 6, and 14. After that date no more of these Robins were seen until March 14, 1923, when a single cock bird appeared. It was seen again on the following day, but after that there was an interval of six weeks until a male was again seen on May 2, another on May 4, and three on May 5. I left Westwood shortly after this date, but during the two following years paid visits to the locality for short periods three or four times a year, and in May, 1925, again met with a few Red-capped Robins.

The observations just recorded suggest that in this district the species is both a passage migrant and a winter visitor. In both seasons single males were seen in March, presumably on passage to winter quarters further north, whilst the winter visitors apparently began to arrive on

April 8, 1922, and on May 2, 1923. My observations also seem to suggest that the two sexes migrate at different times. However this may be, it is clear that the Red-capped Robin is by no means stationary in some parts of its range.

On the opposite side of the continent, the late Mr. Tom Carter recorded that it appeared about June at Broome Hill, south-western Australia, but was absent in the summer, and in 1911 he noted its first arrival for the year on May 8. (Mathews's *Birds of Australia*, VIII., p. 93). In that region it breeds during the winter or early spring, as he records finding nests in July and September. I do not at all think that it was breeding in the Westwood district during the winter, though the season of its visit coincided with that when it is breeding at Broome Hill. This suggests that rainfall rather than temperature controls the breeding season of this species, since the rainy season in south-western Australia is in winter, and in Queensland in summer. In any case, it seems evident that there is still much to be learnt about the seasonal movements of the Red-capped Robin.

## Stray Feathers and Camera Craft

**The Large-billed Scrub-Wren.**—Although by no means a rare bird in the brushes lying between north Queensland and Victoria, the Large-billed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis magnirostris*) is not a well-known species. The explanation lies in its extreme quietness, vocally; in its colouring and its manner of feeding. The bird's peculiar habit of rearing its young in old nests of the Yellow-throated Scrub-Wren (*S. lathamii*) attracts some notice, however. On December 25, 1931, my brother and I attempted to photograph the parents of a young "Large-bill" which we found in an old nest of the Yellow-throated species. After my brother had succeeded in exposing several plates on the adults clinging to the side of the nest, I removed the fully-feathered young bird to a nearby root upon which my camera was focussed. The birds came and fed the young readily, but their quick movement spoilt several plates. When alarmed at the nest the Large-billed Scrub-Wren adopts the mouse-like attitude similar to that adopted by the common Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*). Occasionally it flutters over the dry leaves and debris with tail and wings outspread, scolding in the manner of the White-browed Scrub-Wren (*S. frontalis*) and the Yellow-throated species. When excited on such occasions the mimicking of small birds comes easily to this forager of the jungle branches.—ARTHUR O. ELLIOTT, R.A.O.U., Cambewarra, N.S.W.