

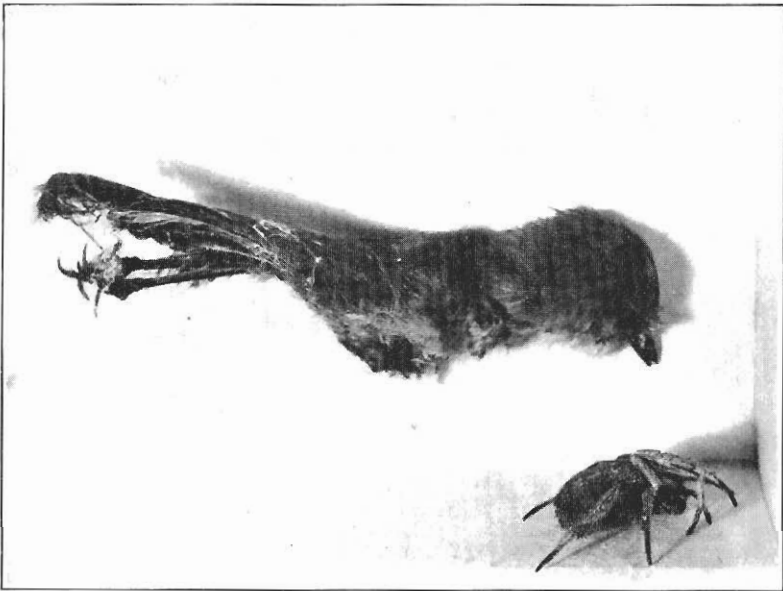
have accounts, with as much detail as possible, of any instances of birds captured by spiders observed by them, in order that as much data as possible may be accumulated. Notes accompanied by specimens of both bird and spider will be especially valuable, as also will be photographs. It is more than possible that some references, especially in the daily press, in this and other States, have escaped my notice, and I will be glad if members will draw my attention to any such omissions.

Birds in Garden Trees.—Most birds take very readily, for nesting purposes, to trees different from those which must have formed, since time immemorial, nesting sites of their kind. In the garden around Mr. Davey's house at the Toolern Sanctuary, I have seen, at the one time, Rufous Whistlers nesting in shaped ornamental Cootamundra wattles and in rose bushes, the usual bevy of "small fry"—Wrens, Scrub-Wrens and Thornbills—in introduced garden plants, Fantails in fruit trees and Babblers in *Pittosporum* bushes.

A belief gained credence, some time ago, that birds shunned flowering trees and shrubs for nesting, because other birds would be attracted thereto and to the vicinity of the nests, but such a theory seems to be without foundation. White-browed Babblers often leave their nests for long periods during incubation. Doubtless the superlatively cosy lining usually to be found in them helps to maintain sufficient heat to permit the sitting bird to "relax" fairly often.—C. E. BRYANT, Melbourne, Vic., 1/9/39.

Mistletoe-birds and Rainbow-birds.—Mr. Gray's note dealing with the Mistletoe-bird and the Bee-eater or Rainbow-bird makes interesting reading. The position in my district is very similar to that stated in the letters referred to. The spread of mistletoe and the wastage of timber on that account has become a very serious problem, especially during a run of bad years when the vitality of the trees has been weakened by dry seasons. It is very noticeable though, that in a good season such as the one prevailing now, when trees are making vigorous growth, many of them rid themselves, to a great extent, of the parasite. Some trees become entirely free from the pest.

It is true that the Mistletoe-bird is the great medium of distribution of the seed. The birds' numbers increase with the food supply. The mistletoe fruit, although the principal food of the bird, definitely is not its only food as inferred by the contributor to the *Beekeeper*. Other berries, even those of the Pepperina (*Schinus molle*) are eaten, and insects, too, form part of the diet, especially when suitable fruit foods are out of season, and when newly-hatched young birds are being fed. I have watched



Blue Wren captured by garden spider at Mosman, N.S.W.,
Jan., 1937.

Photo. by G. C. Clutton.



White-browed Babbler at nest.

Photo. by C. E. Bryant.

the Mistletoe-bird working the foliage of trees in search of scale and other insects just as Pardalotes will do.

The letter referred to mentions that sprouted seed has been seen on the perch of his cage in which he kept his birds. I have seen seed placed in many odd places, including the wire in fences and have watched the bird's method of placing it there. The seed passes through the bird with part of the fruity matter attached, and is deposited in a small skin-like bag containing a clear, viscid fluid which sticks upon whatever the seed may be placed. The seed will sprout wherever it is placed, but, of course, only ultimately survives when it is on a green branch, the seed providing nourishment until the loop-like sprout attaches itself to its host.

Before the days when "possum" skins became of commercial value, phalangers were, in my opinion, Nature's means of mistletoe control. Flowers and fruit were consumed in quantity and the continual nibbling back of young growth destroyed the plants in their early growth. We have upset the balance of Nature and are paying the penalty for so doing.

An examination of nests of the Mistletoe-bird when the young are ready to leave will usually show, on the floor of the nest, a compressed mat of the undigested parts of insects, showing that insects form the diet of the birds after hatching. Above such mat is a mass of mistletoe seed from the fresh to the sprouted state—evidence of the diet as the birds develop. On the branches near the nest, seed, in a similar state to those in the nest, will be found.

Mistletoe-birds visit quince trees in my garden and collect the furry matter that coats the green fruit. This is used with other material for the nests built near at hand. The branches of my quince trees become infested with mistletoe seed which is deposited by the birds during their many visits to the trees. The seeds have to be removed, of course, to avoid the trees being infected.

Beekeepers in this district are rather favourably disposed towards *Merops ornatus*, as they realize that the bird destroys more harmful insects than bees. Beetles, termites and many other flying insects are all food to the birds. It is a common feature to see large flocks of the birds hawking over rising insects.—E. A. R. LORD, Murphy's Creek, Q'ld, 28/7/39.

Several well-known ornithologists have died recently, amongst whom are Dr. John C. Phillips, Dr. Witmer Stone, and Dr. Joseph Grinnell.

Our member, Dr. W. R. B. Oliver, Director of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand, has been appointed a British Empire member of the British Ornithologists Union.