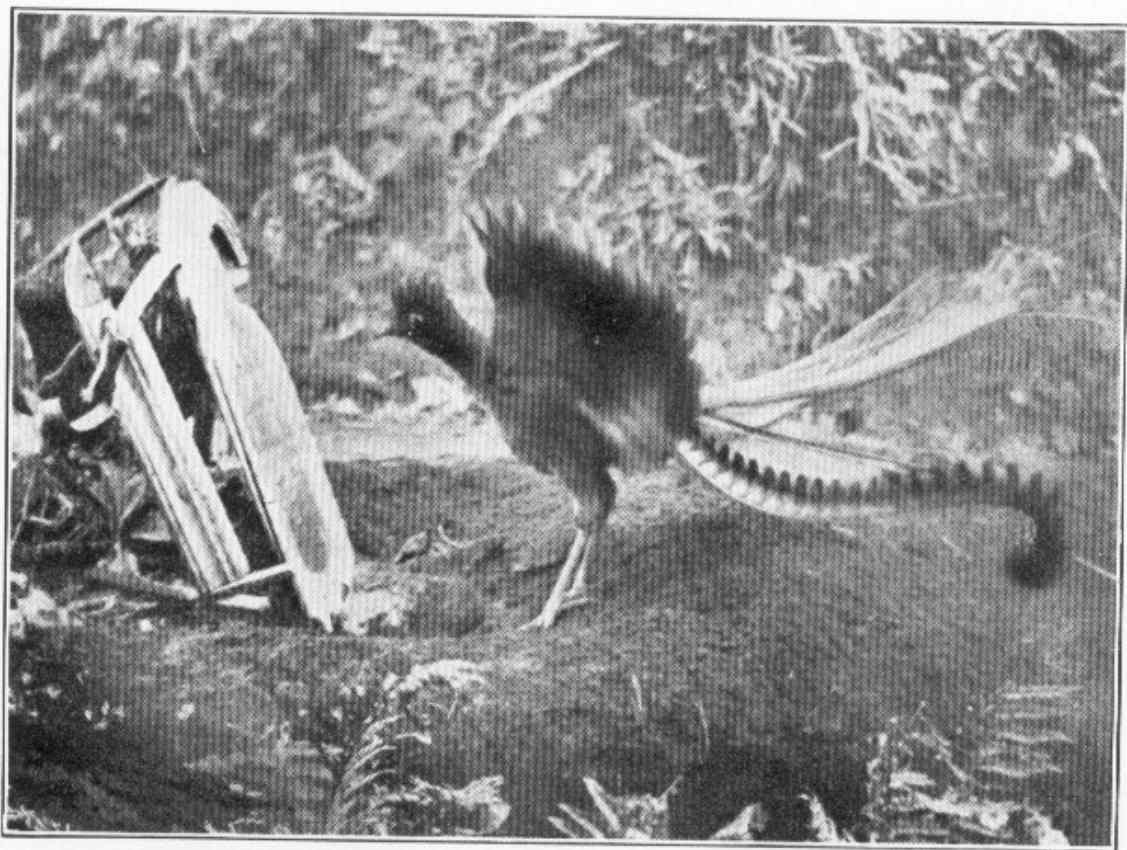


The Lyrebird immediately after his striking mirror with left foot.



Frame of mirror wrecked and much earth excavated from under it.
Photos. by A. G. Campbell.

Curious Story of a Lyrebird

By A. G. CAMPBELL, Kilsyth, Vic.

Interest was aroused, upon the publication of *The Lore of the Lyrebird* by Ambrose Pratt, 1933, by the story of a Lyrebird which "made friends" with a lady at her mountain home, Ferny Creek, Dandenong Ranges. I had the good fortune to be "introduced" by another lady, living some miles away, to another Lyrebird, which came about her home garden. In the former instance the bird displayed upon a specially-built platform outside a large window. In my case the bird visited a large mirror set up near the house. My story, covering a period of about twelve months from April, 1940, is so extraordinary that I cannot do better than merely record the facts, as I saw them, and let them speak for themselves. There must be a streak of showmanship in some Lyrebirds which takes this curious form of publicity, indicating an intelligence and adaptability to altered conditions, which augurs well for the species remaining a treasured possession in our forest reserves.

The visits of the Lyrebird to the mirror were irregular. He might come two or three days in succession or maybe not come for a fortnight. While moulting he was not seen during more than a month. On rare occasions he came into the garden accompanied by either the female only or the female and grown young. My observations were focused earlier upon a pair of Lyrebirds living in the reserve 500 yards from the house. See *The Ema*, vol. XL, p. 357. The male proved to be the same bird which visited the mirror and in this aspect of his behaviour—a kind of double life—his antics about the house and at the mirror showed many things not observed in his normal behaviour in the bushland.

Mar. 31, 1940.—Sunrise timed at 6.33 a.m. Overcast with cloud mist on the hills. Arrived 6.50 in time to see Lyrebird hop into garden and steadily walk along footpath to mirror. Here for some time he sang, and mimicked, in a low voice, what seemed to be farmyard noises, like poultry jostling one another, "quack" of duck, and chattering. There was a Magpie carol, very low but long and sweet, a low Kookaburra chuckle, and again much chatter. Tail was then erected lyre-shaped over head, but not laterally expanded, and the bird appeared to attack his figure in the glass, striking at it with one or both feet, tip of tail being bent against mirror as he did so. I heard him give the "whirr" call of the Fantailed Cuckoo and, among other things, the "goo-ar" of the silver-grey possum.

Another morning, April 14, he stood in front of the mirror, looking about and peering into the trees overhead. Then he started to call slowly the following (as far as recognized): "Quack" of duck, Kookaburra, —, Kookaburra, (pause), scold, —, —, trill, clap, Kookaburra, clap, Kookaburra low but very long and ending with chuckles (about 10 seconds), "clip clip," Kookaburra, "blick blick," rattle. Now raising his tail, not expanded, he dashed at the glass, striking it with left foot like a rooster using his spurs. A strange

person appearing, this performance was abruptly finished. The mirror showed red earth marks where struck. On cleaning the mirror, there were seen to be many small cloudy blemishes from former attacks.

A month later, May 12, a clear morning, the Lyrebird appeared silently at the mirror at 7.10 a.m. With low "chipoo" calls and sundry new unidentified ones, he worked up through Currawong, Kookaburra, and others, erected his tail like a lyre and struck the mirror with the left foot (see photo.). Then he walked away down the path, scraping leaves and picking up several titbits. In two minutes he came back, scratched vigorously before the mirror as if preparing a small mound, then gave a fine series of calls and displays for eleven minutes consecutively. He went through numerous calls much in the manner of ordinary mound display, began "blicking," and then whisked his tail smartly over his back in full display as he faced the mirror about three feet distant. Twice he turned at right angles, but facing the window. On finishing, he folded his tail very slowly and walked leisurely off into the bush. On this occasion I followed him and proved him the same bird that I knew in the forest. In fact, we had breakfast together. He was much interested in logs I turned over as new feeding places. When offered new food, such as dried grubs or dead beetles, he had a way of pinching or tasting them first before swallowing. One large wattle grub, dead several days, he tasted three separate times and eventually rejected it. On another occasion I found this bird in the bush near the garden and followed him out, 100 yards or more, to the mirror. This time he did not call or display. He was more interested peering at the house window, where the blinds had been opened and widened, which made him change his mind, and off he went.

On June 22, the Lyrebird came to the mirror at 8.30 a.m., in very poor light. After gazing at his reflection half a minute, he broke into low, and to me strange, cries, opened his tail partly, raised both wings, and later struck the mirror with both feet. With tail up, though folded, he repeated chatter and small notes like "coo-ah" and struck again with one foot, the ends of tail feathers being pushed against the top of the frame. He sat on top of the mirror, preened a little, then attacked again, some of the sounds being like "tipoo-ah-tipoo" and a fluttering like birds' wings. He did not fully display, but went off through the garden searching for food. There were at least ten muddy streaks on the glass.

On August 21 the bird was stated to have been at the mirror only this once in the past weeks since the last display. It was at 6 p.m. when he sang and displayed.

On September 1 the bird was at the mirror at 7 a.m. His unusual antics were difficult to follow. With outstretched neck he appeared to "talk" at his image, working up to loud challenging "blick-blick" with bill wide open. Then he swung up his tail and attacked with the left foot. Between times he walked up and down the terrace or scratched before the mirror. He also ran along the verandah rail and back, chuckling the while, like he does in a bush "playabout" with another bird. But he did not wait long at the mirror. The female called down near her nest, and two minutes later he was singing away down among the ferns. The egg was due to hatch.

Oct. 20.—The Lyrebird had not been seen for some time except in the bush. This morning, however, he was at the mirror at 6 o'clock, his tail being all moulted out. Notwithstanding, he went through some of his antics—slow musical calls and little notes, "blicking" and striking at the glass. He left in about ten minutes' time, after giving a dozen "claps" of disgust, possibly at his own ridiculous figure. There were two outer "pencils" of new feathers about six inches in length and two centre ones about one inch, visible among the long tail coverts, all of which he stuck up in display as if there were a full tail.

Feb. 9, 1941.—At 5.30 a.m. I saw the Lyrebird step into the garden

and make for the mirror. He must have come straight and silent from his sleeping place. After sundry low calls hard to identify, he tried a long, low Kookaburra laugh, then the rattle or whirring noise and "blick-blick." Twitching his tail overhead to the fighting attitude, he struck the glass hard three times. Later, in the same attitude, he walked along pecking at the glass. Then he ran down the path and back again. As his excitement increased he scratched vigorously under the glass and nearly dislodged it. There was much strutting to and fro in peculiar style, silently pecking at the glass, but he did not proceed to the full display, although he stayed about 20 minutes.

Mar. 16.—At 6.21 a.m., four minutes after sun-up time, the bird made his presence known at the mirror by his peculiar opening calls. Then he gave slow mimicry of bush birds, of which 77 calls were counted at the rate of $5\frac{1}{2}$ seconds each. He made only mild attacks on the glass. After a pause and "walkabout" for three minutes, he went on with excellent calls, including the full song of the Butcher-bird and the rarer calling of the Cuckoo-Shrike, long, slow, and very good. His crest and tail seemed wet from contact with dewy scrub. He gave two full displays and photos. were obtained at six feet. At the conclusion he took wing and sailed or planed steadily downhill 100 yards or more to the bush.

Apr. 12.—Easter Saturday, a lovely morning. At 6.50 a.m. I saw the bird come up outside the garden fence, hop easily over and run to the mirror. He turned his head about trying to see parrots in the chestnut tree. Next he scraped his little mound together and began his performance, which this time lasted more than 20 minutes. As he came to the true mimicked calls, there could be identified those of the Yellow Robin, Grey Thrush, Whip-bird, Pilot-bird, Crimson Parrot, Scrub-Wren, Wattle-bird and Crescent Honeyeater, besides his own renderings. He made two short trips away feeding, and gave, beside the display to the mirror, three full displays to the window, where he could see me inside.

With shortening days the landscape took on the hues of autumn. The weather cooled and heavy cloud-fog hung about the mountains. But there was a new nest building by the creekside. The last time I saw the Lyrebird at the mirror was 7.30 a.m. on May 29 in dense fog, the trees condensing and dripping water freely. His performance then was shortened, although later in the day he was singing well, down in his own territory. He did not again visit the mirror until August 28, after a lapse of nearly 14 weeks.

Summarized, this bird's behaviour at the mirror consisted of: First, peering at his image; low, slow, and many unidentified calls; the tail at the trail, though sometimes slightly apart.

Secondly, with the first whirring or rattling noises associated with the challenge "blick-blick," the tail was raised slopingly over the back, lyre-shaped and unexpanded. The glass was struck with one or both feet. If he tired he walked to and fro, tail still up, merely pecking at his image.

Thirdly, with full-throated melody of his own song, interspersed with many mimicked bird calls, the Lyrebird spread his lovely tail in full display before his "sparring partner" in the glass, then on choice occasions finished with a full bow to the audience at the window.