

## Notes on the Breeding of *Aplonis m. metallica* and *A. cantoroides* in New Guinea

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The following notes concerning the breeding of the two species of *Aplonis* were obtained while the writer was a member of the United States armed forces in New Guinea during 1944 and 1945.

### APLONIS M. METALLICA

On August 11, 1944, a group of Colonial Starlings (*Aplonis m. metallica*) was observed at length in a tree alongside the Butibum River at Lae, north-east New Guinea. Although no detailed investigation was made, it was thought that the individuals were beginning to breed. An estimated number of approximately 200 completed or partially-constructed nests were found in this tree. There were many glossy greenish and purplish-black adults, although only four streaked immatures were counted.

Many of the branches of this tree were broken off on August 16, 1944 by rifle fire from apathetic military personnel. However, an opportunity was afforded by this mishap to examine a large number of nests on the ground at the foot of the tree. The contents of 25 of these nests are as follows:

Table 1

Contents	Number of nests
1 egg . . . . .	7
1 egg with embryo about ready to hatch . . . . .	1
2 eggs . . . . .	4
1 nestling—fairly large (2) . . . . .	2
2 nestlings—just hatched (1), fairly large (3), large (2) . . . . .	6
3 nestlings—fairly large (1) . . . . .	1
1 egg and 2 nestlings, one of which was just hatched and the other nearly fully grown . . . . .	1
Empty . . . . .	2
Empty and apparently abandoned . . . . .	1

There were many other nests which were disturbed to such an extent that it was difficult to judge their contents, although a number of them were undoubtedly empty.

The nest of this species is large and dome-shaped, consisting of grass, tendrils, and small twigs. It hangs suspended from a branch around which it is wrapped rather tightly. The opening is circular, and is situated high on one side of the nest. The inner lining consists of a few broad strips of the sago palm or banana leaf. Each strip of sago palm leaf is woven into the nest so that the dull, under side of the leaf is exposed. Apparently the full complement of eggs is usually two.

These data substantiate the well-known fact that *Aplonis m. metallica* is gregarious to a high degree during the breeding season.

#### APLONIS CANTOROIDES

On February 13, 1945, nine nests of this species were found among abandoned pilings along the shore of Lake Sentani, Dutch New Guinea, opposite the village of Dojo or Sowaidewarre. Their contents are given as follows:

Contents	Table II	Number of nests
Being constructed . . . . .		1
1 fairly large nestling and 1 egg . . . . .		1
2 large nestlings . . . . .		1
2 fully-grown fledgelings; both flew away from the nest when disturbed . . . . .		1
Empty; formerly had 2 nestlings, one of which was taken on February 6 . . . . .		1
Empty; formerly had 3 nestlings, which were collected on February 5 . . . . .		1
Empty . . . . .		3

Another nest, which had two fully-grown fledgelings, was found among abandoned pilings at the village of Dojo on March 8, 1945.

The eggs are deposited simply in a hollow of the upright piling. The inner lining consists of a few grasses loosely arranged to form a bottom for the nest. The entrance is at the top, and is merely the opening of the hollow log.

The individuals of this species are undoubtedly gregarious while breeding, although this may be related to the limited distribution of the abandoned pilings in which the eggs are deposited. There was a noisy congregation of adults when the two fully-grown fledgelings mentioned in Table II left the nest. However, the individuals quickly dispersed, and no further disturbances were noticed. This was apparently a weak manifestation of group defence behaviour in a species which is typically monogamous.

### Stray Feathers

'Flashlighting' the Lyrebird.—The potentialities of flash-light photography for daytime pictures in poor light are well shown by the accompanying 'shot' of the Lyrebird. The picture, taken by a Department of Information photographer, is typical in many aspects—the heavy forest, the scratching bird, the balanced tail, and the Yellow Robin waiting to snap up some small 'crumb' from the larger bird's 'table'.