

In the opinion of the writer, if the habit is assumed and there is an ecological reason for it, it lies most probably in the presence, within the major part of the range of *P. cinereus*, of bird-devouring snakes, principally pythons, the occurrence of which, to the number of some dozen mainly arboreal species, could possibly account also for peculiarities in the nesting habits of some other birds, notably those of the genus *Gerygone*. On Bougainville itself, however, pythons do not occur, only one snake capable of devouring birds, the brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*), being found there, though that species, following the general rule that a mainland species will either not be found on a neighbouring island, or if it be found there, will be commoner than it is on the mainland, is more numerous on Bougainville than it is in Australia. However, in view of the smallness of the series of cases here described, and of the fact that the only other nests of the White-browed Crake which appear to have been recorded were on the ground, and in both instances in a region inhabited by a greater number of species, if not of individuals, of bird-devouring snakes, than Bougainville, the suggested reason for the apparent tendency of the species, on that island at least, towards nesting in isolated and exposed positions must remain no more than an interesting but unsubstantiated hypothesis.

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REFERENCES

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Some Birds of Cook, S.A.—Visitors from the Eastern States travelling by train to the recent R.A.O.U. Congress in Western Australia had an hour to spare at Cook, a small railway town on the Nullarbor Plain. On a small patch of short spear grass near the abattoirs we were delighted to see a party of five Australian Dotterels (*Peltohyas australis*) and some Crimson Chats (*Epthianura tricolor*). In a row of pepper trees along the railway two male Red-capped Robins (*Petroica goodenovii*) were seen. On the return journey, in the same area, parties of the beautiful Orange Chat (*Epthianura aurifrons*) were admired. In the pepper trees were three White-winged Trilliers (*Lalage tricolor*) and on the telegraph wires Rainbow-birds (*Merops ornatus*).—ROY WHEELER, Windsor, Vic., 28/10/48.