

Until November 14, six or eight Pratincoles were present, and on November 15, 16 and 17, two or three. On the night of November 19, almost an inch of rain fell, and Pratincoles were absent on November 20 and 21. On November 27, there were two birds present, and on November 28, there were two birds feeding on the grassed areas, and a flock of ten birds on the shingle areas.

During December there were many showers of rain, and Pratincoles were absent. The only other summer records are January 5 (one bird) and January 16 (two birds). Finally, to complicate the position, one Australian Pratincole was present on May 9.

To sum up, Australian Pratincoles arrived in loose flocks, which were first found on the shingle bed of the river. Birds which were present for some time generally frequented the grassed areas of the pools. After rain, the Pratincoles dispersed, but small numbers generally appeared a few days later.

House Sparrow Breeding Away from Man.—In late 1954 I came across the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) breeding in isolated pairs in open grazing country south of Deniliquin. The nest sites were in red gums and some were up to ten miles from human habitation. Subsequently, I found small colonies further north in the treeless saltbush country between Wanganella and Hay. Parties were to be seen around most of the dams in that area, and breeding had obviously taken place as nests were to be seen in the introduced African boxthorn bushes. Once again the birds were many miles from human dwellings and were apparently existing without direct assistance from man, either in the form of food or nesting sites.

Mr. D. Summers-Smith, who has made an extensive study of this species and published a number of papers on its habits, informs me that these records are the first definite ones he has of the Sparrow living an independent existence. He has unconfirmed reports of their doing so in Utah, U.S.A., Cyrenaica and Burma, and there are records of nesting on uninhabited islands off New Zealand, although it is doubtful if permanent colonies have been founded there.

This change in the ecological habits of the Sparrow could have some bearing on the future status of a number of Australian birds. It would be of interest to know to what extent the House Sparrow is living apart from man in Australia and how long the habit has been in existence. Anyone who can give any information is invited to write to me at Box 30, Deniliquin, N.S.W., or to D. Summers-Smith, 46 Hartburn Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees, c/o Durham, England.—J. N. HOBBS, Deniliquin, N.S.W., 13/7/55.