

notable only for the serene conditions prevailing in the north Tasman Sea. Young sea-birds in general are more inclined to wander than are adults and tend to range further from their geographic origin, sometimes in quite the opposite direction to the general movement. The Currarong bird seems to fit into this category.

## REFERENCES

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See also: 1940 Hindwood, K. A. 'The Sea-birds of Sydney', *Proc. Roy. Zool. Soc. N.S.W. for 1939-1940*, pp. 13-14. (Containing comparative illustrations and text on the two species in the foregoing notes).

## Emus Breeding in Victoria's Mid-Murray Area

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The Emu (*Dromaius novæ-hollandiæ*) has long since become uncommon in mid-northern Victoria and it should therefore be of some interest that one or two pairs are resident breeders on the western side of the Loddon River at Lake Charm East, almost half-way between the towns of Kerang and Swan Hill. We were made aware of this by a grazier—Mr. J. Stevenson—who leases the State forest area of the Sheepwash. This section, covering some 1200 acres, lies between the Loddon River and the Sheepwash Creek, the latter flowing during wet seasons only at which times the Sheepwash area is an island. The area is dotted with dense lignum, closely-growing river redgum (mostly young seedling growth to a height of fifty feet), and irregular patches of black box. There is a swamp about 400 yards long by half that in width covered mainly with bullrush (*Typha angustifolia*). Although small, the area could hide the Emus indefinitely from anything less than an organized search party. Apart from animals the Sheepwash is visited only by occasional shooters, fishermen, and wood-cutters.

On June 15, 1955, Mr. Stevenson guided the writer and Tom Lowe to view two nests with eggs which he had stumbled upon whilst riding horseback in search of cattle. We crossed a log bridge over the Sheepwash Creek and were guided about half a mile along winding timber-cutters' tracks through lignum six feet high, across the bullrush swamp—dry—to the edge of the timber near the Loddon River bank. The first nest visited was placed at the foot of a box tree and was closely sheltered on one side—though not covered—by a clump of lignum.

We advanced quietly in view of the sitting Emu and watched it for a time from some twenty-five yards; its neck stretched out almost at ground level as it watched us. Suddenly it rose and trotted away with plumes flouncing, turning after about twenty yards to give us a long stare before moving off to the cover of the timber. The nest was raised slightly above ground level by twigs, grasses and leaves just sufficiently to give it a nest-like appearance; this was increased by the presence of a scattering of small Emu feathers, some on the nest itself and a patch of them to one side of the nest. This 'outside' patch of feathers suggested some skirmish had taken place possibly between two Emus. Nine eggs were originally the clutch, but Mr. Stevenson had removed one earlier.

We were on the edge of the bullrush swamp and the second nest was located at the opposite end 400 yards from the first—amongst the reeds which were patchy and varied from growths four feet high to a short finer type and almost bare patches of ground. This bird also was open to the sky, in full view as we walked up quietly. I was able to sneak up to within eight yards to see its neck bent back over one wing as it strove to watch my approach. As I tried to photograph it the bird rose suddenly and loped off for a few yards, to turn with a long backward stare before entering thick timber twenty or thirty yards from the nest. Eight eggs formed the clutch. This nest showed little or no construction, the eggs lying on a mere scrape of loose grasses. There were no feathers around this nest.

We saw no sign of other Emus in the area. Mr. Stevenson tells us that in the winter of 1954 he saw a family of six chicks a few days old. In 1953 he came across a group of seven young and one adult, the young at least half grown, both families in the same area as the two described in these notes. He considers they are able to defend themselves from foxes which are common on the Sheepwash. He told us of an incident in which a young sheepdog investigated too closely an adult off the nest and was 'skittled' by a kick and retired yelping. He now shows little interest in Emus.

As the young birds arrive at maturity, their movements are a mystery to Mr. Stevenson who sees an odd pair of adults only and these not often. One old bird he came across recently outside the Sheepwash had been dead for some time and he suggested it had been either 'potted' by a sportsman with a rifle or attacked by dogs.

The fate of the two clutches of eggs described here is unknown as the area was flooded by the swollen Sheepwash Creek shortly after our visit and none of us saw them again. However, as we photographed the nests on July 15 several eggs showed obvious movement and must have been near to hatching.