

The Rufous Whistler: A Pseudo-Fosterer of the Pallid Cuckoo.—On December 6, 1959, at Bibra Lake, Western Australia, I observed a Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) fledgling making persistent sibilant calls from a small jarrah tree in which there was the nest of a Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), containing two, apparently fresh, eggs. The fledgling was within a few inches of the nest and was being attended by the female Whistler. I was surprised, therefore, to note that on two occasions after feeding the Cuckoo, the Whistler settled on the nest in a manner which indicated that it was intent on incubating the eggs. However, the persistent calling of the Cuckoo seemed to upset that routine, inducing the Whistler to seek more food for the apparently-insatiable fledgling. The male Whistler made no attempt to feed the Cuckoo and appeared to be occupied with territorial duties. Twice I flushed the Cuckoo from the jarrah tree but it returned to its original position near the nest.

It appears that the Whistlers were not the true fosterers for the following reasons: (a) The male completely ignored the Cuckoo, (b) the eggs would have been ejected from the nest by the Cuckoo nestling, (c) the demands of the Cuckoo would not have allowed the Whistler to construct a nest and lay a clutch of eggs during the fledgling period. Unfortunately I was unable to climb the tree to determine whether the eggs were incubated or not, but they appeared to have a translucent appearance, indicating that they were reasonably fresh.

On November 22, two instances of the Western Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus superciliosus*) feeding Pallid Cuckoo fledglings were recorded at this particular locality. I gained the impression that the Spinebills fed the fledglings infrequently and hence were incapable of satisfying their appetites. Perhaps, therefore, it was one of these Cuckoos which accepted or adopted the Whistler as its pseudo-foster parent. Possibly the begging actions of the Cuckoo, such as the demanding call and wide gaping, induced the female Whistler to feed it. Having been fed once, and if the feeding response could be again induced, it would be a simple matter to follow the new parent and beg more food.

On December 13, I inspected the Whistler's nest, only to find the eggs missing and the nest partly removed. Hence it appears that the Cuckoo would have completely upset the Whistlers' breeding routine, forcing them to abandon their nest and select an alternative nest site. The male Whistler was heard calling in the vicinity and there was no sign of the young Pallid Cuckoo.

In ornithological literature, there are numerous examples of a Cuckoo's accepting food from birds other than its foster parents. The observation I report, however, appears to be exceptional in that the Cuckoo apparently became completely dependent on a pseudo-foster parent for a source of food supply.—JULIAN FORD, Attadale, W.A., 16/5/60.