

Stray Feathers.

The Brown Warbler (*Gerygone richmondi*).—This bird is perhaps the smallest of the eleven species of small birds that make up the list of the Australian members of the *Gerygone* genus of the large and cosmopolitan family called by the comprehensive name of Warblers. Though not plentiful like the white-throated species (*G. olivacea*), in the immediate surroundings of Sydney, it is well known to those of our members who visit the thick brushes along the upper Port Hacking River of the National Park or in the Gosford district.

It was found nesting in a piece of similar country at Kurrajong Heights in early December. The nest was almost completed. The female bird was doing the actual construction work, making trip after trip to the nest, carrying threads of bark which she was arranging inside the nest. One always knew when she was coming. Away through the trees the light but clear little notes that are said to repeat "What is it, what is it?" are suddenly heard. They come from the male bird and mean that the female is about to start off for the nest with her bill full of bark. The song (if it can be termed a song), grows louder and louder and two little brown birds appear, making their way towards the nest by small stages from tree to tree and branch to branch. The male bird leads the way, singing with great animation, and every time he alights he flutters his wings (like a Jacky Winter hovering), but for a brief moment only, as both birds are eager to press on to the nest. In darts the female, almost too quickly to follow with the eye. While she is inside the male bird on the nearest twig flutters and flutters his little wings in ecstasies of joy and excitement until she comes out, and off they fly together.

I saw and heard this performance many times from a few feet from the nest. It was all very pretty. On one occasion when the worker stayed inside longer than usual, the male bird flew to the nest and looked in to make sure all was well. The nest was suspended about seven feet from the ground in a wild raspberry cane. It had the heavily hooded entrance typical of the nests of this genus, and was made of red bark similar in appearance to that used by the white-throated species. In shape it was very long and tapered evenly (like a boatswain's marline spike), all the way to a fine end. The exterior was decorated with pretty pieces of light blue lichen. The birds were of most inconspicuous plumage—brown above, dirty white below, throat bluish-grey with slight markings: sexes alike.—H. WOLSTENHOLME, Wahroonga, N.S.W. (November 20, 1927).

Jacky Winters' Low Nesting.—The charming little Jacky Winter or Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*), shares with the Wagtail the honour of being the most familiar and most liked Flycatcher in many parts of Australia; certainly this is the case along the coast of N.S.W. Jacky Winter's tiny nest is usually placed in the fork of a dry horizontal branch, and may be as high as fifty or sixty feet from the ground. Rarely does it build so close to the ground as the Wagtail frequently does. A few weeks ago, however, Mr. H. Wolstenholme, R.A.O.U., called my attention to a Jacky Winter's nest that was only about three feet from the ground; it was in a paddock at Wahroonga (Sydney), scarcely twenty yards from a busy road, and was placed on the horizontal branchlet of a dry bough lying on the ground. A dull, showery day prevented me securing good photographs of the birds themselves, so I turned attention to the nest of a Grey Thrush a little distance away. The accompanying illustrations show rain-drops suspended on the casuarina needles about the Thrush's nest, and also on the vegetation near the Jacky Winter's wee home.

Curiously enough, at about the same time Mr. A. F. D'Ombraïn, R.A.O.U., of Gosford, photographed a Jacky Winter's nest in a similar situation. The limb of a small eucalypt had blown down, and on one of the forks of this, less than two feet from the ground, the birds had built their nest. It was just a few yards off the fairway of the Avalon golf links, a few miles north of Sydney. Mr. D'Ombraïn observes that there were plenty of more secure and higher situations which the birds could have chosen. However, they got the brood safely away.—A. H. CHISHOLM, Sydney (November 20, 1927).

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Cuckoo Notes: New Combination Clutches.—This season the Cuckoos are giving the birds in southern Victoria a particularly bad time. I do not recollect another season when they have arrived in such numbers. I refer more particularly to the two species of Bronze Cuckoos and the Fantailed and Pallid Cuckoos. I fancy I have taken two lots that have not been previously recorded. At Mitcham, some fifteen miles east of Melbourne, on November 5, 1927, I found the nest of the Orange-winged Sittella (*Neositta chrysoptera*), containing two eggs of the Sittella and one of the Fantailed Cuckoo; and yesterday, December 11, in a gully near Iremont a nest of the Rose Robin (*Petroica rosea*), contained an egg each of the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*) and Fantailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*). In the case of the Rose Robin I have taken an egg of the Square-tailed Cuckoo, and this species has been recorded by the late H. L. White as a foster-parent to this Cuckoo. But here we have, as I have mentioned, two Cuckoo eggs not previously recorded for this Robin.—FRANK E. HOWE, Canterbury, Victoria (December 12, 1927).



NEST OF GREY THRUSH, SHOWING RAIN-DROPS ON THE CASUARINA NEEDLES.
Photo. by A. H. Chisholm.

Befriending Wild Birds.—Here are a couple of pretty bird stories that have reached me from bush boys, both good observers. The first, from Will Griffiths, of Penfield, South Australia, is as follows: "While I was cultivating one day, I saw a Dotterel flutter along the ground in front of the horses. Knowing by this that she had a nest I stopped and hunted for it. In a minute or so I found it. A few little twigs lay in a hollow in the top of a clod, with two cream eggs with dark spots. The eggs were about the size of a starling's. Not wishing to take or destroy the eggs, I made another nest about three yards to the right. I marked the spot very carefully. The nest and eggs were then on cultivated ground, where the horses would not tread on them. Then I went three or four more rounds, and knocked off for dinner. When I resumed work in the afternoon, the Dotterel was peacefully sitting on her new nest. Out of six nests that I have shifted during the last two seasons, four birds have returned. One of the two other birds was not sitting, and it became dark before the other one had time to locate her nest."

The second story is from J. Sewell, Barrallier, N.S.W.: "I was passing a briar bush in which there was a Blue Wren's nest, with three young ones. Noticing the parent birds flying around in a state of excitement, I approached to investigate. Just as I reached the bush, one of the young birds fluttered to the ground at my feet, and another one just managed to fly on to my shoulder. The third one was in the jaws of a brown snake, which had climbed up the bush. I carried the two young birds to another bush a few yards away and went back and killed the snake. As I was carrying the young birds back to the nest, one of the parent birds used to light on my arm and remain there for a moment and then fly to the nest and back to my arm again. I have been feeding the family on crumbs of bread each day, and now they are so tame that they will approach to within two inches of my hand."—A. H. CHISHOLM, Sydney (1/12/27.).

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Seeking Satin Flycatchers.—Through the kindness of Dr. B. Anderson, R.A.O.U., of Westbury (Tasmania), I was enabled recently to take a trip to a locality frequented by that beautiful summer visitor, the Satin Flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*). Catching the early train and travelling about forty miles, I then alighted and walked the short distance to "The Willows," where Dr. Anderson's car was soon ready, and we drove to a part of the Meander where a small wooden bridge crosses the river. Leaving the car in a bush paddock, we walked up the bank of the river, amid a strong growth of white gums, wattles, dogwood and tea-tree. The "Satins" were calling strongly with their reedy notes just across the river, as were the Olive Whistler (*Pachycephala olivacea*), with their remarkable "I'll whit-yu," strongly accenting the

"whit." One of these came across to our side of the river, and after calling repeatedly from a patch of scrub, suddenly flew across in front of us, revealing a beautiful golden-tinted plumage.

Strolling back towards the bridge, we heard the Flycatchers calling excitedly from some poplars planted close to the road. Passing through a swing-gate and glancing upwards, we at once espied a "Satin's" nest about eighteen feet up, in a most conspicuous position. The neat little grey cup was placed on top of a dead poplar limb which projected horizontally from the tree, and then curved upwards in a shallow bow, the nest being situate at the highest part of the curve. The birds continued to call near by, but would not return to the lichen-adorned cup while we were about.—H. STUART DOVE, West Devonport, Tasmania (November 15, 1927).

Correspondence.

THE NAME "PODARGUS."

(TO THE EDITOR.)

SIR.—In *The Emu* (Vol. XXVII, p. 117), Mr. F. L. Berney describes the gouty appearance of the feet of *P. papuensis* and takes it for granted that it was on account of these gouty feet that Cuvier called the bird *Le podarge*—*podarge* being the French word (through Greek and Latin *podagra*), for gout in the feet. Mr. Berney certainly appears to be correct, for Cuvier is said to have been the "greatest naturalist of his day" and "of pre-eminent ability as a scientific observer" and he would in all probability have observed the thick, swollen feet.

The transposition of one letter for another (*g* for *r*), whereby the Latin *podagra* became the French *podarge*, would, I think, be an instance of the well-known process in word-formation which philologists call *Metathesis*—e.g., *L. certus* was changed from *cretus* and the word "bird" was once spelt "brid"—rather than an anagrammatic change, such as *dacelo* from *alcedo*. An anagram is a purely artificial rearrangement of all the letters of one word to form another word. Anagrams have long been resorted to by scientists for names of new genera. Dr. W. E. Leach (1815), made *dacelo* from *alcedo*. This is the stock example among bird names. Later we find *Zapornia* (Stephens) from *Porzana* and *Toburides* from *Butorides* (Mathews).

Mr. Berney refers to the flight and wings of the *Podargus*, but it is the feet only that the name refers to; the wings do not come into the matter. It seemed to me the bird might have been thought slow on its feet.

Yours, etc.,

Wahroonga, Sydney.

H. WOLSTENHOLME.

November 17, 1927.