

Miniature Cameras for Bird Pictures

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Since notes on the above subject were forwarded for the January issue of *The Emu*, the writer has had further opportunity of testing the camera in the field. Just prior to Christmas he heard that Jacanas (*Irediparra gallinacea*) had been discovered "within forty miles of Sydney," and in the absence of any further information a search was commenced for them on January 6. Good fortune attended the venture, and late in the afternoon, during a torrential downpour, a bird was discovered running about close to some cattle which were feeding on "water-couch" grass on the edge of a swamp.

A camp was immediately made and the bird watched until heavy rain and early darkness made further observation impossible. Daylight came with brilliant sunshine and steamy heat, but by 8.30 a.m. a nest with four eggs had been located just beyond the limit of grass, and probably, on that account, safe from disturbance by the cattle. As the photograph shows, the position gave little opportunity of hiding an ordinary camera, but the small

instrument was so easily disguised that the bird returned to the nest within a few minutes—the photographer, of course, being at the far end of his two strings. During the next few hours, by means of the re-loading device, some thirty exposures were made, picturing the bird in almost every position that she assumed during her approach to the eggs, her shading of them from the sun, and the continued incubation of the clutch. The time was mostly occupied in observing the bird's behaviour and in releasing the shutter whenever her position seemed to warrant doing so.

Many points, emphasizing the advantages of re-loading from a distance, came into view. Among the most important, it was found that the bird, not being disturbed by frequent visits to the camera, acted calmly and naturally throughout, and was in no danger of being driven to desert her eggs. Most of the exposures were made within a short period, and as the light was constant "tank development" produced negatives that are identical in contrast and density, thereby simplifying printing or enlarging very considerably.

The possibilities of thorough observation of birds, their food supplies and many other points are much greater than with an ordinary camera. Usually the photographer, over-anxious to re-load, and always short of time, frightens the bird away for long periods, and has no time during her visits for anything more than his photographic activities. It is safe to say that in future the photographer's notebook will fill much more rapidly than heretofore, and that his picturing will become what it should be—a means of illustrating, amplifying, and verifying his observations.

No notes on the Jacana's habits are offered here because it has since been learned that Mr. James Potter, who first recorded the birds so far south, has already written a paper for *The Emu* on his observations. The writer, therefore, closes with hearty congratulations to Mr. Potter and an acknowledgment that many happy days spent with these delightful birds were only made possible by his interesting discovery.
