

Stray Feathers

Golden Plover and Little Stint.—Whilst on a visit to some friends living at Georgetown (Tas.), I was able to make a very close and happy inspection of a small flock of Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*) which were feeding on some small flats exposed at low tide on the right bank of the estuary of the Tamar, about a mile seawards from the town. Associated with the Plover were a number of Little Stints (*Erolia ruficollis*), and farther out on the very margin of the tide, were some Eastern Curlew (*Numenius cyanopus*), and what I took to be a few Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), although I could not be certain of the identity of these last.

Although the main road to Low Head passes within 60 to 70 yards of high-water mark at this point, and it being holiday time numbers of fast and powerful motors were passing to and fro every few minutes, the Plover and Stints took not the slightest notice of the traffic, nor of our party, consisting of six persons, when we approached to within easy gun-shot of them, and then, to see how near an approach they would permit, I walked slowly down on to the mud-flats. Before the birds arose, I was within 20 yards of them, discerning their every movement, as they busily engaged themselves searching for the tiny crustacea which form their chief food.

Whilst the plumage on the back and scapular region was certainly tinged with the golden hues from which these birds (the Plover) derive their name, it was not at all brilliant, and although I examined some twenty birds I could not detect any white about their breasts or bellies. The plumage on these parts seemed to be of a dull plum colour. I took it that they were all first-year birds on their first trip down from their breeding haunts, and therefore in immature plumage.

The Stints, tripping about here and there in rapid short runs, were not so easy to inspect, but it also seemed to me that their plumage was duller than that of those I always see on the flats on Anson Bay at low tide, much later in the season.

My friend, a long-time resident at Georgetown, told me that no one ever molests the waders which frequent the tidal flats in the Tamar, so that would account, no doubt, for the extraordinary lack of fear these birds exhibited. The Curlew are certainly more wary here, though I have seen them feeding quite close to the road which fringes the shore at George's Bay, with motors constantly passing by within 80 yards of them.

What bird lover who has seen the Golden Plover in flight has not admired their wonderful powers of speed on the wing? With their plaintive whistle, though not so flute-

like as that of the Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) they always seem to me to convey something of the wild spirit of their vast and lonely breeding grounds amidst the tundras of the north.—ROBT. W. LEGGE, Cullenswood, Tasmania, 30/12/34.

Noisy Invaders.—A striking feature of the autumn and winter of 1933, continued into the following spring, was the great number of Brush Wattle-birds (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*) about the town of Devonport and suburbs. Almost every flowering tree-lucerne in the gardens and paddocks had its pair of those loquacious birds, the calls of which were heard from early morn until nearly dark. There is a male which up to the time of writing had been coming to the Bugloss bushes in my garden every morning about 5 o'clock, to extract the nectar of which the florets are full, and as the bushes are just outside the window, I get the full benefit of the bird's "melodious" voice. It gives a regular display, ducking its head down between its feet, then lifting it on high, its tail being elevated at the same time; the breast and throat are puffed out, and then come the various calls—"Kook-ay! Wok wok! Kewick, kewick!" and a number of others for which it is difficult to find words. One call, only used occasionally, is rather more pleasing than the rest; it reminds one of a large drop of water falling from a height into a tank.

Bugloss and tree-lucerne seem to be the favourite flowers with this species, and as there are a good many grown about the town, they are probably responsible for the number of the birds. During the winter months the "Cape wattle" (*Albizzia lophantha*), which flowers properly in June, July, and August, was also largely patronized.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tasmania, 7/11/34.

Kite and Pipit.—Late one afternoon in October, we sat on the grassy shore watching a pair of Pipits (*Anthus australis*) feeding. A Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*) suddenly appeared, flying low, and swooped at one of the Pipits. The Kite missed and, still flying low, passed on pursued by the Pipit—the latter bird rising above the Kite made a vicious downward blow at it. With remarkable dexterity the Kite "looped the loop" or somersaulted—in the air—caught the Pipit in its talons and flew off with it. All this happened in a second or so of time. Within a day or two a small flock of Pipits with much excitement and twittering left the locality—the one bird remaining. Most likely she had a nest or young brood.—L. M. MAYO, Brisbane, Qld., 3/12/34.

The Great Knot (*Anteliotringa tenuirostris*).—

Anteliotringa tenuirostris Mathews, *Birds Austr.*, vol. 3, pt. 3, p. 275, pl. 164, Aug. 18, 1913.

Calidris tenuirostris Schaanning, *Ibis*, Jan. 1929. Kolyma district, N.E. Siberia. (Eggs described: cf. *Emu*, vol. xxviii, p. 299, April, 1929). Leonidas, Portenko *Arctica*, 1933, No. 1, Nov., pp. 75-98.

Nestling.—The under-side, on the whole, is greyish white. The forehead, cheeks and chin are greyish with irregular blackish streaks and small spots. One single streak runs from the culmen to the crown; another from each side of the upper mandible to the eye; and yet lower down a streak runs from the lower mandible to the cheeks. The spaces around the eyes are silvery white. The crown is of a tawny colour with irregular, as to outline, but symmetrically-distributed black spots and streaks; the white tip of each individual down is more developed the nearer it is situated to the occiput, which, together with the neck, is of a lighter colour. On the neck and the occiput there is no tawny colour at all, but the dark spots become greyish-brown and diluted. The back is black, on its upper part are two short rusty streaks; over the tibia are irregular brownish-ochraceous streaks; the entire back is covered with tiny white spots situated on the tips of the down, especially on the posterior part, close to the uropygial tuft, as well as on the space over the tibia; shoulders and forewing spotted with a mixture of blackish, tawny and whitish spots; the outside of the carpus is greyish-white with a big blackish spot; on the posterior part of the cheeks there are irregular dark spots; the dark bases of the down show clearly through on the breast, which is greyish white; the under surface of the wing is silvery white with a dusky spot; abdomen pure white; the hair-like tips of the white down on the breast, neck and chin, the fore-head, wings and tibia are of a dark brownish colour; these dark hair-like tips of the white down and the white tips of the dark down conceal the impression of a flat surface.

It may be gathered from the above that the colouration of the young is a very variegated one and closely resembles the general colouration of the environment in which they are found. In this they are aided, not merely by the unusual pattern of the design, but also by the above-mentioned misleading impression of different depths, given by various parts of their covering. Feet bluish-grey, with a yellowish tint on the back of the tarsus and on the under surface of the toes; basal half of the bill is of the same colour, the tip blackish-pink.—Communicated by GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Meadway, St. Cross, England.

Rose Robin.—During November of 1934 Messrs. J. A. Ross, E. W. Bunn and I spent a few weeks at Lorne, and on November 17 we journeyed through Allendale to the Sheoak Creek. Our objective was the study of the nesting economy of the Pink Robin (*Petroica rodinogaster*), but in that we were unsuccessful, as all of the gullies close to Lorne had been badly burned twice in the last few years. We were told by Mr. Abe Allan, who knows this species well, that it occurs at the Cumberland River, which had not been burnt.

However, we were fortunate enough to locate the Rose Robin (*P. rosea*) in two different places on the Sheoak River. This is very far south for the bird and is an extension of its previously-known range. I watched one pair for quite a long time, during which the male constantly fed the female. Probably a nest was close by. Sir Charles Belcher, in his *Birds of the District of Geelong*, p. 227, writing of the Pink-breasted Robin, refers also to the Rose Robin as inhabiting the wet country of Gippsland, from Fern Tree Gully eastwards. He adds, "There seems no reason why it should not occur here also."—F. E. HOWE, Canterbury, Vic., 4/3/35.

The Effect on Birds of Arsenic Used in Poisoning Grasshoppers.—The extensive use of poison bait against grasshoppers (*Chortoicetes terminifera*) during the recent irruptions has caused much discussion in certain quarters as to what effect the wholesale distribution of poison will have upon the bird population.

The customary bait used is composed of 1 lb. of arsenite of soda, 30 lb. of bran and 4 lb. of molasses or treacle. Paris green is sometimes used instead of arsenite of soda, but for our purpose they may be regarded as identical. The bait is distributed in the form of a crumbling mash and should be spread over the ground as finely as possible. Fifteen to twenty lb. of bait, dry weight, is used to the acre, and if correctly distributed there is little danger of stock or birds suffering harm. Few of the objections raised to locust poisoning, on the grounds of bird destruction, seem to be based on more than surmise, and I have not yet heard of an authentic case of extensive bird mortality resulting from this practice.

An article appearing in the Review of Applied Entomology discussing the experiments* of Whitehead, published in the *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experimental Station*, No. 218, throws some important light upon this question. Extracts are as follow:—

"In Oklahoma, demestic fowls and quail confined without food for 24 hours and then supplied with bran poisoned with 4%

*Fuller details of these experiments are available in *The Auk*, vol. lii, p. 118.—Ed.

white arsenic (As_2O_3), which was scattered about the pens at the rate of 100 lbs. per acre, showed no indications of poisoning after 24 hours. When poisoned bran was forcibly administered 74 mg. As_2O_3 proved slightly toxic to a 22 oz. fowl (i.e., 3.363 mg. per oz. of bird weight).

"When individual grasshoppers were caged with bran flakes of a selected standard size, each weighing approximately 2.337 mg. and containing 0.0935 mg. As_2O_3 , the number eaten by one adult of *Melanoplus bivittatus* Say., *M. femurrubrum* De G., and *M. bispinosus* Scud. averaged 8.05, 3.03 and 3.2 respectively. The reliability of these tests in indicating the arsenic content of poisoned wheat was confirmed by analysis of 72 poisoned adults of *M. bivittatus*, which were found to contain on an average 0.75 mg. As_2O_3 . From a series of experiments in which 144 birds of various species were fed on grasshoppers, the following conclusions were drawn: Fowls discriminate between poisoned and unpoisoned grasshoppers and eat less than half as many of the former; the amount of arsenic consumed by them, eating only poisoned grasshoppers, averaged less than half the toxic dose and their weight and growth after 66 days is not materially affected; quail eating a normal number of grasshoppers would, if the latter were poisoned, receive from 1 to 7 per cent. of a toxic dose of arsenic; there is practically no danger to adult wild birds from eating poisoned grasshoppers though there may be more danger for nestlings.

"Chemical analysis of the bodies of fowls that had eaten many poisoned grasshoppers showed that they could safely be used for human consumption."

—C. F. H. JENKINS, B.A., Asst. Entomologist, Department of Agriculture, Perth, W.A., 28/2/35.

Movements of Swifts.—My notes were all made in this district, which lies at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, about 20 miles east of Melbourne. Only the more striking items are recorded. Spine-tailed Swifts are common in the earlier months of the year and this is the species referred to unless otherwise stated.

Feb. 4, 1925.—Watched evolutions of Swifts in high wind just before sunset, circling near and far above the ground, sailing, not flapping the wings. Usual flight is eight or ten rapid strokes of the wings (at estimated rate of 440 to the minute), then a long sail.

Jan. 18, 1928.—First Swifts seen, flying south.

Feb. 6, 1929.—About 9 a.m. on a warm morning with cloudless sky, a flight of Swifts was noticed circling far overhead, attention being first called by a few near the ground sailing in big circles. These rapidly worked up and joined the main party a mile or more up, where birds were in the *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experimental* the whole lot moved rapidly south as well. On a former occasion I recollect seeing a similar flight by chancing to look up against a high cloud bank. There were two movements, firstly the birds moving in and out the compact flock and then the whole moving at the same time in a given direction as well.

Mar. 2, 1929.—Heard Swifts calling as they passed, otherwise may not have noticed them.

Mar. 20, 1929.—Large flight of Swifts moving north near the ground, and skimming the timber—3 p.m. A calm warm day. Could hear the swish of wings.

Feb. 20, 1930.—At 10 a.m. after a night's soaking rain following the heat wave, flying white ants (termites) out in thousands. A large party of Swifts hawking overhead. Have seen Swifts also taking flying sugar ants (*Camponotus*) which were leaving their nest in a long upward column.

Dec. 23, 1930.—Party of Swifts, the first seen this summer, flying north.

Feb. 25, 1931.—A party of eight Fork-tailed Swifts, hawking low over open paddock, showing white rump and long tail, moved south. Smaller than Spine-tailed species and more swallow-like in movement.

Mar. 30, 1932.—Against high northerly drift hundreds of Swifts circling; several couples playing or chasing—6.30 p.m. Main body passed south. Surely not after ants so high up? If food is in these layers the insects must have drifted from northern districts.

Oct. 17, 1932.—A Fork-tailed Swift with white rump, larger than a swallow, flying south and low.

Feb. 11, 1933.—Swift picked up with freshly broken wing, span $19\frac{1}{4}$ inches, weight $4\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. Made loud querulous call on being touched.

Feb. 22, 1934.—Swifts before rain, catching flying white ants.

Jan 25, 1935.—Swifts first seen flying southwards, low—10 a.m. Fine, warm, no clouds.

The question of where Swifts pass the night is not settled. I assume they must rest somewhere, and the following points may have some bearing upon the matter. A walker once told me that in high country one Easter time a Swift was seen "sitting on a nest in a bush." This was early morning and very cold. Later the bird was gone and the nest proved to be a handful of rubbish. A bird brought to me in 1930 was found clinging to a fence post, not being able to fly on account of having sustained a slight injury to a wing. But it could run with ease up any tree trunk and ascend even the hard smooth surface of a telephone pole, so sharp were its talon-like claws. The most remarkable thing was that it preferred to cling in an upright position to any wooden object, and was most uncomfortable when placed on a flat surface. It rested at night clinging to the inside of a kerosene case and did not change position at all. Here the use of the stiff spiny shafts on the tail feathers is evident. See *The Emu*, vol. xxix, pl. 50, left figure.

In this district I have frequently observed a party of Swifts late in the evening circling about the front of Mount

Dandenong, and recollect one calm week in autumn time seeing them about for many evenings in succession. Do they at nightfall retire to the trees or rocks to roost? A correspondent in Tasmania records:—

Going to the top of Mount Dandenong one evening I saw the birds come lower and lower as they circled until they were amongst the dead standing timber. They were calling frequently, but the light was so poor that I cannot say I saw any of them come to rest.

In *The Emu*, vol. xvi, p. 108, Miss K. Currie, Lardner, Victoria, gives an account of Swifts perching on trees while bush fires were burning in the district.—A. G. CAMPBELL, Kilsyth, Vic.

Little Shearwater Breeding on Rottnest Island.—In W. B. Alexander's articles in *The Emu*, Vol. xx, parts 1, 2 and 3, he mentions the fact that the Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*) was found breeding on the Houtman's Abrolhos off the west coast of Australia and on the Recherche Archipelago off the south coast and hints at the possibility of its being found breeding on the islands off the coast of the Swan River district.

In September, 1922, I spent three weeks on Rottnest Island in the company of N. C. Anderson and W. C. Robertson, two keen bird observers. We found about a dozen pairs of *Puffinus assimilis* breeding on an islet connected by reef with the mainland (of Rottnest), known as Parrakeet Island. My records show that on September 8 we found three nests with eggs and four nests with young. On September 10 we found a further two nests with eggs. The nests were made of sticks and seaweed and were situated under a ledge of rock, or in burrows. The young resembled black chickens and were very fat. Three of the eggs were elongated but the other two were shorter and broader.

The eggs measured, in centimetres:

Two (elongated form) 5.59×3.35 , 5.56×3.4 .

Two (broad form) 5.17×3.55 , 5.12×3.6 .

Some five or six years later W. C. Robertson was on the island again and said the birds were still breeding on the islet.

I might add that *Casarca tadornoides* was breeding on the islets or rocks off Rottnest. We found a nest in a cave four feet above water on a rock off "The Basin." It had been a nesting place for some years, I think. The cavity was lined to a depth of three inches with down. There were 15 eggs in the nest. The date was August 31, 1922. A pair of Ospreys had a nest on the mainland at the west end, and on September 5, 1922, had two eggs in the nest. I believe they shifted out on to one of the islets afterwards, but I very much doubt whether they are still breeding there.—ANGUS ROBINSON, Onslow, W.A.

The Cuckoo and Its Egg.—Mary Gilmore, in her fascinating book, *Old Days, Old Ways*, published last year, tells of a time in her girlhood in New South Wales when the family had moved into a new wooden house, still without verandah or back-door, and how delighted they were when the Swallows came and built under the eaves of the projecting shingles. After a time a Cuckoo came out of the bush and flew to the nest, but both parent-birds being at home, they fought her off and an egg fell to the ground. Next afternoon she came again, with the same result, but the third day only the female Swallow was in the nest. The Cuckoo fluttered an instant in front of the nest, pivoted, turned, and shot the egg backwards into the structure. The girl saw the whole thing, and that the space crossed by the egg was at least an inch and a half—the Cuckoo did not at any time touch the nest. There had been space to wheel, dodge the resisting sitting Swallow and retain balance, power and steerway both for immediate action and for the hurried retreat. Mrs. Gilmore considers that to eject the egg with some sense of security the Cuckoo must have a conscious or unconscious “sense of trajectory,” and stronger ejection muscles than birds the eggs of which need only to be dropped. It seems more reasonable to credit this strong projective power than that the egg should be laid on the ground, taken up in the bill, and then conveyed to a nest, domed, or otherwise inaccessible.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tas., 5/2/35.

Painted Honeyeater.—Mr. Hindwood’s comment on the paucity of notes on the Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*) prompts me to add more to my note which appeared in *The Emu*, vol. xxvii, p. 43. Since writing it I have noted several pairs in the spring of each year but not at other times. That does not necessarily mean that they were not present during the rest of the year, for my visits to the bush are not so regular when birds are not nesting.

They are to be found all round Bendigo, particularly in the ironbark forests, and I have no doubt are the greatest spreaders of the mistletoe, which is very plentiful, because the Mistletoe-bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) is comparatively rare here. The only nest of the Painted Honeyeater that I have found was at Diamond Hill, four miles south of Bendigo, on October 29, 1932. It was situated in a clump of mistletoe at the end of a branch of a high box tree. The two eggs could be seen only from a branch above. I was informed later that the birds deserted. A pair of Mistletoe-birds building in a garden about fifty yards away also deserted. Possibly the residents were too interested in both nests.

On November 10, 1932, about two miles east of Bendigo, I saw, quite distinctly, a Painted Honeyeater filling its

mouth with mistletoe berries and then flying off with them, evidently to its nest, but I was unable to keep the bird in sight to its destination.—MARC COHN, Bendigo, Vic., 3/3/35.

White-winged Cough. — *Corcorax melanorhamphus* is here shown on its nest in the lofty branches of a yellow gum. It was a solitary nest, clearly visible from the ground, and about forty feet above it. An extension ladder used twice was necessary to get above the bole and lower branches. When approached, the bird left the nest, and three or four hungry youngsters, almost ready to leave the nest, thrust their great mouths upward. After fluttering around for a few minutes, the bird, with some difficulty, settled over her brood and the photograph was taken. Immediately afterwards she flew off and did not return. The photograph was taken at the Toolern Vale Sanctuary, Victoria, on November 11, 1934.—COLIN SMITH.

The Biter Bit.—In A. J. North's *Nests and Eggs*, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 267, the following appears under the species Grey Falcon:—

"A very interesting immature male was received in the flesh by the Trustees of the Australian Museum from Mr. G. E. Driffeld, of Condobolin, N.S.W. It was shot the previous day, in the presence of the donor, by Mr. A. P. Cox, of the Australian Joint Stock Bank. Around the middle toe of the left foot, and near the claw, was tightly closed the bill and dried skull of a Barnard's Parrakeet (*Barnardius barnardi*). Apparently the latter when caught had fastened on to the toe of its captor, which it securely clenched in its death struggles; evidently it had been carried about by the Falcon for a long time, for the skull was bare and the skin, with only a few feathers remaining, was dry and shrivelled."

I am able to place on record a similar incident. A tame Red-winged Parrot (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*) was heard screeching one day, apparently in difficulties. Investigation revealed a tangled mass of Hawk and Parrot flapping about on the lawn, by no means silently. On being captured, the Parrot was found to have closed its bill on its assailant's tarsus just above the foot, and showed no inclination to relinquish its advantage. In fact, the Hawk seemed the more inclined to cry "quits" and it was doubtless only the weight of its victim that prevented it from rising.

Of typical Goshawk build, but deep chocolate-brown in colour in place of the more usual rusty-red, this bird was first thought by me to be referable to the "Lesser Goshawk" (*Astur cruentus*), No. 239, of the 1913 Checklist. On submitting it for identification, however, I found that it was merely a slightly-darker form of the typical Australian Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*).—A. C. CAMERON, Biddeston, Qld., 21/2/35.



White-winged Chough on nest.

Photo. by Colin Smith.



Goshawk, showing marking of under surface.

Photo. by A. C. Cameron.

Some Field Notes on the Sooty Owl.—On December 31, 1933, Messrs. J. A. Ross, F. Stanley, R. S. Miller, and I were walking along a track bordering a very beautiful fern gully near Tremont, in the Dandenong Ranges, and on glancing at a dead tree I espied a pair of fully-grown but immature Sooty Owls (*Tyto tenebricosa*) perched together on a horizontal bough. Many of the feathers had the down still adhering. On passing the spot the following week the birds were not to be seen. On Sunday, October 21, 1934, Ross and I, in another gully about half a mile distant from the spot where we saw the young the preceding season, again came across this species. Two small blackwood trees close together contained four birds, two adults and two immature with down on feathers. Each of the parents held a ring-tailed "possum" in its talons—the white tail tips of the creatures being clearly discernible. A week later the four birds were again seen in the same trees and on this occasion one of the adults was again in possession of a ring-tail.

Again on December 2, 1934, a little lower down this gully we again came across this Owl. On this occasion there were two immature birds, accompanied by only one of the adults—possibly the same birds we located on October 21, and it is also possible that the male was with the young, and the female again brooding. On December 9, 1934, we again saw the three birds (1 adult, 2 young) perched in a blackwood. On December 23, a vacated nest of the Pilot-bird (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*) was found, and as it appeared to contain Owl's feathers I sent them along to Mr. George Mack, of the National Museum for identification. In his reply Mr. Mack writes:—

"The feathers that you enclosed were an interesting lot and so far I have made out the following: 1 Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*), 3 Brown Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*), 1 Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*). I am not at all sure about the remainder, but if I reach a conclusion I will let you know."

Mr. Mack also identified feathers from a nest of the Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) as follows:—Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*), Boobook Owl (*N. boobook*), Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*), Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus funereus*), Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*), and Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*). Mr. Mack writes:—

"The Sooty Owl (*T. tenebricosa*) is not represented, and of the above list the only doubtful one is the Cockatoo."

I think Mr. Mack's identification of some feathers as those of the Black Cockatoo was correct, because Mr. Ross and I saw a small party of four or five birds close by a week or two before.

I should say by the above observations that the Sooty Owl

is an early breeder, and the young found on October 21 were probably two months old. Incubation of the eggs may be for any period between three and four weeks, so that possibly the eggs were laid towards the end of July. From the circumstance that only one adult accompanied the young birds on December 2 and 9 it is possible that the species is double-brooded.—F. E. HOWE, Canterbury, Vic., 4/2/35.

The Painted Honeyeater.—I read with interest Mr. K. A. Hindwood's article on the Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*) in the January issue of *The Emu*. I was rather surprised to read the numerous references to its rarity. Birds of the species mentioned arrive in this locality, on Myall Creek, 9 miles north-east of Dalby, about the first week in September, and remain here until the end of December, when they disappear for the rest of the year. Where they go to or come from I do not know. During the period of their visit they are quite numerous, and their notes are constantly to be heard throughout the day. There is something about this bird's note that once heard is always remembered.

Their visits coincide with the flowering and seeding of the mistletoe (*Loranthus pendulus*), which is very plentiful on the *Eucalyptus rostrata* trees lining the banks of the creek. A number of these trees have been killed in the last few years through this parasite. These dainty little Honeyeaters appear to live almost exclusively in the tree tops and among the mistletoe. Very occasionally an odd one comes about the homestead and is seen in the pepper trees—the berries appearing to be the attraction. I have not personally found the nest of this bird, but I have no doubt they breed here. After having read the description of the nest in Mr. Hindwood's article, I remembered that I had seen nests resembling the description, but have not seen the birds at them.—N. GEARY, Dalby, Qld., 21/2/35.

Migration Notes. 1934.—Aug. 26.—The Welcome Swallows (*Hirunda neoxena*) arrive.

Sept. 19.—The first Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) calls.

Sept. 23.—First Fantailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) was heard uttering the trill note at 6.30 a.m. on a frosty morning. Several seem to have arrived that morning, which was clear and windless.

Oct. 17.—First Pipit (*Anthus australis*), and the first "Summer-bird" (*Coracina novæ-hollandiæ*) of the season were noticed this morning. The wind was strong from the south the previous night.

Oct. 20.—Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) in open gum forest just west of the Forth River, a favourite resort of this species. A number of Pipits in a grass paddock two miles west of Emu Bay.

Oct. 22.—Bronze Cuckoo (*Lamprococcyx plagosus*) first heard this afternoon; fine, sunny, with north-west breeze.

Oct. 28.—"Tree-Diamond" (*Pardalotus striatus*) first heard this season, calling "Pick-it-up" in gums near Middle Road. The morning was sunny with breeze from the north-west (Devonport).

Dec. 12.—A Pipit was noticed making his soaring flight from a grass paddock; rose about 25 or 30 feet, then floated down in slanting line, uttering sibilant song.

1935.—Jan. 18.—Pallid Cuckoo calls for last time of the season.

Jan. 22.—Fantailed Cuckoo calls for last time of the season, uttering the plaintive double whistle, not the trill.

Jan. 31.—A Pallid Cuckoo, apparently an adult, observed on roadside wire, but quite silent.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tas., 2/2/35.

Sydney Bird Notes.—On Tuesday, November 13, 1934, a friend telephoned me to say that a small bird had flown in the window of his office and had been flitting about the room most of the day. It became exhausted during the afternoon and was then captured. From the description given me the bird was obviously a Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*). The building is in the centre of Sydney and the nearest forest vegetation, and that of a cultivated nature, is at Hyde Park, some three-quarters of a mile away. Rufous Fantails are summer migrants to south-east Australia and usually pass through the Sydney district in October or early November; some stay to breed in the dense gullies and jungles to be found within twenty or thirty miles of the city, but it must be an uncommon happening for the species to be found in an area entirely built over as in this instance. Late in the afternoon the bird was taken to a suitable locality by car and liberated.

The same night, or rather the following morning, at 1 a.m., I was making for my home at Willoughby, five miles north of Sydney, when I heard a Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) overhead. I stopped and listened to the bird calling, which it did about every twenty seconds, until it passed beyond my hearing. A few hours previously there had been a heavy rain-storm and at the time when I heard the Kingfisher, clouds entirely obscured the moon. The bird appeared to be flying fairly low, and was moving north. Sacred Kingfishers, when on migration, usually travel at night, and I have frequently heard them calling during the still clear nights of September and October. The direction of the spring migration is south, the bird heard calling on November 14 was, however, flying north. I can only conclude that through some cause, probably associated with the existing weather conditions, the bird had lost its sense of direction and at the time was migrating in the wrong direction.—K. A. HINDWOOD, Willoughby, N.S.W.

Nesting of the Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*)—In *The Emu*, vol. xxxiv, pp. 114 *et seq.*, Mr. J. J. Bryant describes the method in which a pair of these little birds built their nest, the cup being constructed before the dome. According to my experience that is not the usual practice. When living on the Eastern Goldfields I saw a good deal of the Weebill, where it is a common bird. I never found it far from eucalypts, and the favourite haunts were those peculiar growths of slender saplings which occur in long, narrow strips, with a width of only a few feet. Here the shrill call of the Weebills—"Winny-wieldt"—was sure to be heard, and amidst such surroundings it builds its pretty nest. I have watched its construction several times, and found that the commencement was made at the rear part of the dome, the birds proceeding forwards and downwards until the outline of the nest was completed; the same material being used as mentioned by Mr. Bryant. No doubt the construction of a nest is always influenced by its immediate surroundings. In the case of the Weebill I have found the lanceolate leaves and their slender stems were always woven into the fabric of the nest.

Birds often vary a little in their notes and habits in widely-separated districts. Locally we have a little clan of Emu-Wrens, strictly confined to the coastal sandhills. Instead of building the typical domed nest with a side entrance, the entrances of their nests are almost at the top and so loosely constructed that in several cases I could see the eggs simply by looking down from above. One would think that these apparently feeble little flyers would select nesting sites in the sheltered valleys, but with us, fairly open bushes on top of the ridges, and exposed to the strong ocean winds, are chosen.—F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury, W.A.

Reviews

[*The South Australian Ornithologist*, vol. xiii, pt. 1.]

The January number of the above contains interesting papers on birds noted on Kangaroo Island, and at Myrtle Springs Station; Notes on the Pied Cormorant, Dusky Moorhen and Starling; Notes on the Eastern Swamp-hen and Banded Landrail; Some Additions to the South Australian Museum Collection; and General Notes. The last contain references to Fork-tailed Swifts flying as low as 10 feet above the ground. The Museum Additions refer (*inter alia*) to a Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*) killed by a centipede, death ensuing within five minutes of the centipede's biting the bird; and to a Duck, possibly *Anas superciliosa*, with a mussel attached to the inner toe. The mussel weighed 3½ ounces, and caused the bird to trail the foot when in flight.