

hours of semi-light, combined with the expectations of the morrow and unique experience of sleeping beside an Eagle's aerie, made the occasion even more memorable.

We noted the nest to be composed of dead sticks up to four feet long, and in some cases almost as thick as a man's arm. The centre of the concave structure held a rough lining of what had been green leaves. The whole structure measured five feet in height and was six feet across and was estimated to contain at least half a ton of timber. The foundation was noted to be very old and rotted, and had obviously been in use for many years. Local fishermen informed us that they had known of its existence and use in several previous seasons. Remains of food, in and around the nest, consisted of dried-up parts of fish, Penguin and petrels.

By reason of the topography of the island, we were of the impression that this was the only possible place for these birds to nest, and in view of the afore-mentioned record in the Harrison collection, it appears that it has in all probability been in use, at least intermittently, for something over half a century.

Unfortunately we were unable to band the young on this occasion as our prime object was Albatross Island, and the bands suitable for the Albatross were found to be too small for the Eagle.

Stray Feathers

Haunts of Pipit in the south-west of the North Island, Central New Zealand.—My account of the habits of the Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*), *Emu*, vol. 55, pp. 104-107, mentions that thistles, bushes, ferns or rushes attract it in Makara County and environs in the south-west section of the North Island. Further observations carried out at other places in such area confirm that. They were made at Upper Hutt, Judgeford, and at Te Horo, Manakau and Ohau in the coastal plain of the south part of the Manawatu district. With some earlier observations these studies likewise show that the Pipit seeks open spaces, also, separately or collectively, according to locality, of short herbage such as grazed grass, dry sections of water-courses, boulder beaches, roads or tracks.

The following are sample observations. On 11/4/55, I walked four miles, through countryside devoted to sheep-farming and dairying at Manakau, where plants judged characteristic of the Pipit's typical haunts were not much in evidence. The only Pipit seen was foraging through desiccated, ungrazed grass by a road's edge. This transect was repeated in September 1955, when no Pipit was recorded. On 1/4/56, I made a slightly-longer transect which confirmed

the rarity of this species in this particular environment, though the bird was located readily in other pasture, covered partly with low scrub, in the upper watershed of the nearby Waikawa River. Again, this species was not observed on 8/10/56 in dairy pastures of the same kind about Te Horo, though a bird was noted at the outlet to the sea of the small Paraha Stream, fossicking in stones covered with a large, creeping succulent plant. Neither was it recorded under similar conditions on 29/12/55 in fields between Lake Papaitonga and the main road, Ohau, though it was present on the lake shore calling from swamp plants. In the Upper Hutt district the Pipit is found where a narrow track provides the only open space in thick and extensive scrub growing three feet high and more on hillsides north of the confluence of the Akatarawa and Hutt Rivers and not far from the Kororipo Stream. Also I have seen this species using three different public roads, surrounded by similar thick scrub, as open spaces in the breeding season.

Finally, the bird was numerous on 20/1/57 where gorse scrub met well-grazed grass near the confluence of the Hutt and Wakatikei Rivers.—H. L. SECKER, Upper Hutt, N.Z., 27/4/59.

Brightly-coloured Wren.—In *Wild Life* for September 1952 I made reference to the locating of a wren which at that time had me puzzled and which I have since determined must have been a *Malurus lamberti* of exceptional coloration. I wish to record the occurrence, with as much detail as possible, in case of possible future search for the bird or its accidental discovery again.

In March 1952 I was cutting tea-tree poles in the swamp country between Tintenbar and Ballina on Emigrant Creek, N.S.W. It was the time of late monsoonal rains, and the swamps were filled with water. The atmosphere was steamy, and mosquitoes were in swarms which made work almost impossible. Mr. M. L. Hart of Sydney was with me. The mosquitoes were so bad that we decided to leave the swamp and take a spell in the cabin of the truck. Rain was falling heavily at frequent intervals. The truck was out near the main road and away from the water. In a thicket of lantana about 20 feet from the truck and close by the creek we could hear a family of wrens twittering as they flitted about. We took little notice of an occasional female wren perching independently on the outer side of the scrub, but suddenly Mr. Hart drew my attention to a male wren that had made a surreptitious approach to the outer branches and had perched in full view of us. It hopped on to a small limb, remaining there for some ten seconds or so before departing into the scrub again. A feature of the colouring was so abnormal for a Variegated Wren that I could not believe it was one.

Later, in Sydney, I made an examination of some specimens with Mr. Kinghorn of the Australian Museum. There was nothing to indicate that our bird was *lamberti* except for the fact that there is a great variation in the wing colouring and some birds incline to a neck band of reddish colour, this latter being generally very inconspicuous. Most of the colouring had appeared to conform with the general colouring of *lamberti*, but the band across the neck, joining the blue, was broad and vivid red, more like the red of *M. melanocephalus*. The band appeared to be a full half inch wide. The wing coloration appeared not to show the red tinge revealed in many specimens, but probably that might have been obscured by the distinguished coloration on the neck.

The area is the home of the three wrens, *M. melanocephalus*, *M. lamberti*, and *M. cyaneus*. Although I have covered much of the swamp country since the occurrence, I have not chanced to find the bird again. But in times of heavy flooding of the swamps wrens seek the higher land generally, which tends to make them more concentrated, and it is on occasions of these meteorological conditions that a search may yet find this specimen. Inquiries in the district as to its being known revealed nothing at all.—
W. STEWART McCOLL, Tintenbar, Ballina, N.S.W., 12/4/58.

The Purple-crowned Pigeon in south-eastern Australia.—
In an earlier note (*Emu*, vol. 53, 1953, pp. 303-304) I listed the known occurrences of the Purple-crowned Pigeon (*Ptilinopus superbus*) in eastern New South Wales, south of the Dorrigo district, and in Victoria and Tasmania.

The following additional records for New South Wales are noted—

1939, January 26. Shellharbour, 60 miles south of Sydney. Bird in adult plumage shot while it was feeding in lantana scrub on the edge of a patch of rain-forest in a gully (*teste* F. Johnston).

1956, May 15. Ulladulla, 120 miles south of Sydney. Bird in semi-adult plumage (a few purple feathers in crown) given to C. P. Humphries by some boys who said other boys had shot it with a catapult while it was feeding on seeds in the open capsules of a tree later identified as *Pittosporum undulatum*. Specimen in coll. L. C. Haines, Haberfield, Sydney. The following year, on July 3, 1957, Mr. Humphries saw a fruit-pigeon (?Purple-crowned) fly across the Pacific Highway at Milton, near Ulladulla.

1959, April 7. Adult bird found alive entangled in the wire-netting of a tennis court at Gordon, 9 miles north-west of Sydney. The bird was injured on the breast and on one side of its head and died on April 11. Specimen in coll. L. C. Haines, Haberfield, Sydney.

Because of the absence of field observations, and the paucity of specimens, the status of the species in south-eastern New South Wales is obscure. Further south, in Victoria (one record) and Tasmania (one record), it would appear to be merely a straggler. The small fruit-pigeons generally are very difficult to see as they move about the thick foliage of trees: their plumage patterns and colours blend remarkably with the lights and shadows of the tree canopies and the greens of the leaves.—K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W., 20/4/59.

A Lyrebird Dancing in a Pool.—Recently I took a friend of mine to Sherbrooke to show him the pool where Lyrebirds bathe. While we were descending into the gully, two young males were singing and performing nearby. On arrival at the pool, one of them came and jumped into it, and after some wading in the water, suddenly lifted his tail, lowered it over his head and began singing and swaying, standing nine inches deep in water. Fortunately my movie camera was ready and the film, though under-exposed due to poor light, shows with sufficient clarity this remarkable event. Three years ago I filmed a young male wading and singing in the pool, but I have not heard of a full-scale performance under such circumstances.—K. C. HALAFOFF, Ashwood, Vic., 4/7/59.

Mutton-bird Mortality.—Much has been written over the years concerning the mortality, each spring, of the Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), which takes place along the south-eastern coastline of Australia during the annual southerly migration of the species to traditional breeding islands in Bass Strait. It has been generally accepted that the mortality is mainly due to either a failure of the normal food supply, or just a natural 'fall-out' of weak and exhausted individuals. Probably, in most seasons, it is a combination of both.

An interesting feature of the 1957 mortality was that far greater numbers than usual were cast up alive along Illawarra beaches (N.S.W. south coast). Although many were killed by dogs, quite a few found their way, by varied means, to my garage, where they were found to be suffering a viscous nasal discharge. This was accompanied, in nearly all cases, by a gentle nodding of the head which became much more pronounced and almost violent just prior to the unfortunate bird's death. Most birds were not thin or emaciated when discovered, but a rapid drop in body weight soon became evident after it was found impossible to feed them forcibly.

Considerable time was spent in an endeavour to return some of the stronger birds to the sea, but all efforts proved

fruitless. Their sense of balance seemed affected in some way, making normal flight impossible. Two birds put overboard from a small fishing boat half a mile off shore were recovered on the beach a little over an hour later.

Although the external symptoms suggested some form of virus pulmonary ailment, I could find no apparent disease or malformation of the viscera in dissected specimens, but noted that, in nearly all cases, the victims were young birds or non-breeders, both sexes being victims.

Since the foregoing notes were submitted for publication, Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey personnel have notified the Wildlife Division of the C.S.I.R.O. that Wandering Albatross no. 140-02111, an adult male banded off Bellambi on August 23, 1958, was present on Bird Island, South Georgia, from December 29, 1958, to March 6, 1959. During that time it occupied a territory with a mate, but did not breed.—A. R. SEFTON, Thirroul, N.S.W., 11/4/59.

Straw-necked Ibis in Tasmania.—Records relating to the appearance of *Threskiornis spinicollis* in Tasmania are very few. Thus it is of special interest to be able to add an additional sight record of the species. The bird in question was first seen by me near Kelso at the head of the River Tamar in northern Tasmania on November 10, 1958. It was in flight when first observed, but soon settled on top of some tall tea-tree in the middle of a flat paddock. It was there that I managed to approach to within fifty yards and spend several minutes watching it with binoculars before it flew off in a westerly direction. I have since made repeated inquiries, but have failed to find any additional record of its appearance.—R. H. GREEN, Antill Ponds, Tas., 7/5/59.

Nesting of the White-breasted Sea-Eagle.—Numbers of pairs of the White-breasted Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) are to be found breeding in various coastal areas to the north of Sydney, and in August-September 1958 particular attention was paid to a pair that nested in a tall blackbutt at The Serpentine, Brisbane Water. The tree stood out above a canopy of high rain-forest and an under-scrub composed of lantana and other obstacles, so that it was necessary to cut a track in order to reach the base of the tree.

The Eagles occupied about a fortnight in building the nest, and another fortnight passed before we could be sure that brooding had begun. Then it was decided to investigate the nest, largely because its height from the ground was a challenge. We began by clearing the ground below in order to fire a catapult at a fork about 120 feet up. Unfortunately, with the first shot from the heavy spear-gun rubber I tore the sinews of my right arm, and as no-one else could shoot straight, or get the 1½-oz. slug off without tangles in the

light line, the best that could be done was to get the line over a limb about 95 feet up.

I climbed to that limb, then went out about 12 feet and tossed the 8-oz. lead on the light cord line over a branch about 30 feet higher, where I could go outwards for a third 'bite' higher again. At this stage 'fireworks' started. Lower down, a possum had sprung from a hollow and landed safely in the lantana below, and now a flying squirrel (possum-glider) jumped from a dead spout, spread its flying membranes, and glided about 600 yards down the gully. Then two more gliders emerged and floated away from the intruder. (The appearance of these four mammals, I may say, appeared to cause the watchers below more interest than my own actions in climbing out into a stiff breeze to toss the lead up higher).

At this point a Spotted Pardalote emerged from a knot-hole on one of the outer limbs. Such a height must surely be a record for the nest of a pardalote for the hole was more than 120 feet from the ground.

Presently, yet another glider emerged from a hollow—one quite near me—and followed its companions down the ridge. It was a most impressive sight, from where I was situated, to watch this graceful creature sailing about a quarter-mile into the gully below, there to disappear.

Now, with all the mammals out of the way, I climbed the remaining distance and looked into the Eagles' nest. It contained two eggs, which were resting on a bed of leaves. Then I dropped the heavy lead and the cord line to the ground, where Alan Cameron (an engineer) took a measurement. This showed that the nest was situated at a height of 145 feet 9 inches.

It is the highest climb I have made and higher than any others of which I can find records. The next highest (as far as I can ascertain) are 131 feet to a Goshawk's nest at Dorriggo, N.S.W.; 129 feet to a Satin Bower-bird's nest on the McPherson Range, Qld; 125 feet to a Red-browed Tree-creeper's nest at Lorne, Vic., and 110 feet to a Bald Eagle's nest in America.—C. RHODES, Petersham, N.S.W., 27/4/59.

Flame Robins with Young in Northern Victoria.—On October 8, 1958, during a short visit to the higher slopes of the Kingower Ranges, an area about four miles south-west of Inglewood, I observed a pair of Flame Robins (*Petroica phoenicea*), the male in full plumage, and was surprised to find that the pair were feeding two immature birds which, however, could fly quite well. The male occasionally gave its nesting call-notes. I think it almost certain that the pair nested in the near vicinity but I failed to find the nest during the brief search made for it.

I have been unable to discover the height above sea level of the ranges. Mt. Korong some eight miles to the north-east is 1,400 feet and appears to be much higher than the ranges: my guess at their height would be about 1,200 feet.

I wonder if the birds have since remained in this fairly thickly timbered area during the hot summer months? I have not had the opportunity to revisit the area.—F. A. WATTS, Heathmont, Vic., 29/1/59.

Reviews

A Time to Look: A Book to Read.—Graham Pizzey's book *A Time to Look*, Heinemann, 1958, 94 pp., 37 pp. ill., price 30/-, may be said to exemplify the author's closing words—"To process, as it were, the sights and sounds of the natural world and express them in photographs and words in as true and telling a manner as I am able". It is a combination of film pictures and word pictures, both of quality. In Australia there are no professional ornithological photographers like Eric Hosking in England, and others elsewhere, though John Warham's activities are directed that way. Pizzey has aspirations to devote most of his time to picturing birds and deserves encouragement if this first collection is a promise of more to come. Perhaps, here and there, there is some striving for effect in the language employed, but it is a minor fault: on the whole the style is good, and certainly entertaining. The author says that he has patience—a concomitant of bird photography. Patently he has ability, enthusiasm and ingenuity in devising means to achieve his object.

The author's special occasions, red-letter days with birds, and joyous events that, like Wordsworth's daffodils, "flash upon that inward eye" are presented, so that readers may share his bird-watching experiences—Wedge-tailed Eagles at home, Gannets and Cape Barren Geese in Bass Strait, waders on Mud Island, Ayers Rock, the Barrier Reef highlights and lesser pleasures. A practical aspect is a chapter on the development of a technique and technical data.

The publishers have been liberal in respect of photographs, but the variation in sizes and the grouping is not always pleasing, and the setting of some captions sideways detracts from appearance.

A pleasant book, a suitable gift for overseas friends, whether bird-students, or not, a record of observation and skill.—C.E.B.

Curlew-Sandpiper.—In 1957, L. A. Portenko began a series of papers on the rare waders of northern and eastern Siberia. The first instalment dealt with the peculiar Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*). A second paper, 'Studien an einigen seltenen Limicolen aus den nördlichen und östlichen Sibirien—II', *Journal für Ornithologie*, 100, 2, 141-172, April 1959, deals with the Curlew-Sandpiper (*Erolia ferruginea*) and describes the species as purely a far north Asiatic breeding form. Its breeding range extends from the Kolyma River in the east and reaches almost to the Ob River in the west.

Portenko describes the courtship, display, nest, eggs, and downy young. A coloured plate depicts a downy chick and two chicks of the Pectoral Sandpiper (*Erolia melanotos*) for comparison.

An intermediate plumage phase which the author calls the pre-nuptial plumage is described and figured.

Migration routes of the Curlew-Sandpiper apparently lie along coastlines, lakes and streams. From the evidence of banded birds it seems that individuals do not always go to the same region each year.—E.F.B.