

and Yarra Rivers. I discovered its nest about 4 feet from the ground, in a stunted bush, on the edge of a tea-tree scrub which covers part of that locality. The structure is cup-shaped, somewhat deep, and about 4 inches outside diameter; dried fibres, fine twigs, and stalks form the exterior, and the lining is composed of horsehair and fine grasses. It contained three fresh-laid eggs; length, $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch; extreme width, $\frac{1}{32}$ -inch; shape, not much pointed; ground colour white, with fine red-brown markings, consisting of points, streaks, and roundish dots, the larger markings being most abundant at the thicker end, where they form a sort of wreath, while some of the smaller ones are scattered over the other parts of the surface. The markings are, in nearly every case, surrounded by a faint ashy margin of their own colour, imitating the appearance of having been painted on the white ground before the latter had properly dried, thus causing them partially to run into the white surface. This seems to be a decided characteristic in these eggs. The nest was discovered about October."—H. K.

Stray Feathers.

APSOTOCHROMATISM.—Those interested in the discussion which is vexing the souls of contributors to English and American bird magazines as to whether a moult takes place at every seasonal change of plumage, and which has been conducted in some cases under the barbarous heading of "Apsotochromatism" (literally a non-falling-off of colour), may find food for thought in the following incident, recorded in the *Victorian Naturalist* (vol. ix., p. 168), and mentioned originally in a letter to one of the editors of *The Emu*. Mr. E. M. Cornwall, a close observer of birds and their ways, says that a Galah "managed to injure its wings when flapping them, as birds love to do, after a shower. . . . It was soon noticed that the whole of one side of his plumage was becoming of a darker colour, and two days after the injury the pink of the injured side had turned a dark red, and the grey of the back was distinctly darker on that side. . . . The bill also assumed a darker colour on that side." The vane of a feather is usually regarded as physiologically dead, but this occurrence, though an exceptional one, seems to strengthen the argument of those who contend that it is possible for colouring matter to pass from the basal gland throughout the whole structure.

* * *

FOR OBSERVERS.—No detail in bird life is too trivial to be overlooked. All aid to a complete knowledge of its life-history, which is not revealed only in what may be called its public appearances, but in those chapters of its existence when

it is unaware of being watched, and during which the observer must lie patiently hidden, but ever alert. A wider knowledge of bird anatomy would also be an assistance to exactness in the study of ornithology.

Where species are divided by very narrow lines, as in the case of some Australian birds, there is always the probability of an intermediate one being brought to light which may connect one with another. A good collector, in any branch of natural history, is always on the watch for such specimens.

The date of each migratory bird's appearance in and disappearance from each district would furnish valuable reading for ornithologists. If supplemented by the date of nesting, number of clutch, &c., and verified by the signature of the observer, these details would be worth preserving for reference and for checking purposes. Migratory might be more clearly distinguished from non-migratory birds, geographical limits of species defined, &c. Other details, such as variations in size, plumage, colour of eggs, or in habit, would also be of interest. True "field notes" forwarded for publication will always be acceptable.

* * *

BELL BIRDS AND CATERPILLARS.—"Saw a Bell Bird's (*Oreoica cristata*) nest about the middle of June. Male was sitting on two eggs, one about half the size of the other and addled. Hairy caterpillars in nest. Have found young during July."—Tom Carter. Hairy caterpillars placed in the nests of Bell Birds have also been noted in Queensland ("Nests and Eggs," p. 311—Campbell). Can any member suggest a reason why the insects are found in this particular bird's nest?

* * *

DROUGHT AND DEARTH OF BIRDS.—"Native Companions have been very scarce in this locality this season. In the early part of the year small flocks were to be seen flying overhead in a northerly direction, but of late there are only odd pairs to be seen, whereas at this time last year they were here in hundreds. The scarcity at present is owing, no doubt, to the drought.

"The young grasshoppers are not so plentiful either, which is nothing more than expected, as last year there were very few female grasshoppers about, not more than 20 per cent. being females.

"I noticed that favourite little bird, known here as the Summer Martin or Wood Swallow, arrived to-day. These birds always seem to come here from the north, flying in large numbers high in the air. They are great destroyers of the young grasshoppers,—more so, I think, than the Ibis. A peculiar feature about the Summer Martins is that as soon as the grasshoppers begin to fly they cease destroying them.

"There are few young Emus to be seen. There are plenty of old birds of both sexes about, but through the drought they have not laid."—A. J. SIMPSON. Deniliquin, N.S.W., 8/10/01.

* * *

FIELD NOTES OF JNO. T. TUNNY, WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, MADE ON BEDOUT ISLANDS, 30 MILES N.W. OF CONDON, APRIL, 1901. — One egg of the Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*) in each nest, which is only a small hole in the sand. In colonies.

Sooty Tern (*S. fuliginosa*). One egg in each nest.

Small Tern (species?). One egg in each nest, usually in the sand, under the tall grass.

Booby or Brown Gannet (*Sula sula*). In each nest two eggs. Nest is usually a small hole scratched in sand, sometimes a few pieces of sponge, &c., strewn round. (See plate ii., part 1).

Masked Gannet (*S. cyanops*). Two eggs to each nest, on the sand. (See plate ii.)

Lesser Frigate Bird (*Fregata ariel*). One egg to each nest. (See plate ii.)

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RICHMOND RIVER (N.S.W.) NOTES.—Mr. Henry R. Elvery reports two curious notes from the Richmond River scrubs:—(1.) In several instances he has observed that the small Brown Tit (*Acanthiza pusilla*) relines deserted domiciles of the Yellow-throated Scrub Wren (*Sericornis citreogularis*), and lays its own eggs therein. (2.) Not far from Mr. Elvery's house was a bower of a Satin Bird in a patch of second-growth scrub. When the Satin Bird left the district (it does not breed there) the bower was appropriated by a Regent Bird. Mr. Elvery was witness to these facts himself.

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THE BRUSH CUCKOO (*Cacomantis variolosus*).—An egg was found on the King's Birthday (9th November) at Scotchman's Creek, Oakleigh, near Melbourne, in a White-shafted Fan-tail's nest, together with two eggs of the Fan-tail. Incubation had commenced in all the eggs, but was more advanced in the strange egg. The nest, which was situated in a thick belt of tea-tree (*Melaleuca*), was placed so low that one could look into it whilst standing alongside.—P. AND A. YOUNG. Caulfield Grammar School.

* * *

A SPOTTED BOWER BIRD AT HOME.—"There is a Bower Bird's playground here (Crowdsdale, Q.)—quite a new one. The bird is getting quite a collection about him—small stones, snails' shells, pieces of paper, bleached and burnt bones, green berries, caterpillars' webs, and a Hooded Robin's egg-shell. The last-mentioned, which I gave him, occupies a place

of honour. He is a very clever bird—gets fresh ironbark (eucalypt) leaves every day, places them in the bower, and throws the stale ones out.”—ERNEST D. BARNARD.

* * *

FROM A LADY CORRESPONDENT (QUEENSLAND). — “A little Shepherd's Companion (*Rhipidura tricolor*) has built in the vine right in front of my window, so I can watch it while doing my hair at the glass. Though I do not agree with the poet that

‘Birds in their little nests agree,’ &c., &c.,
yet since I saw the R.T. savagely attack a small Honey-eater (*Ptilotis fusca*) and get it down on to the path on its (the P.F.'s) back, I have ceased calling them (R.T.'s) ‘dear little things.’”

* * *

TIME CHANGES ALL, HOW SOON!—Lately a British ship (the *Knight Errant*, with a cargo from New York), 500 feet over all in length—the longest vessel that has come up the River Yarra—was berthed in the Victoria Dock, over the spot which not a quarter of a century ago was the edge of the West Melbourne Swamp, where Wild Ducks dabbled and Black Swans paddled in the mud.

* * *

A SAD MISADVENTURE.—On the 23rd October, at Barcardine (Q.), a bird fancier named Watts met with a fatal accident. He had climbed a large gum tree to a height of about 60 feet after a stray bird when he fell (through a branch breaking) to the ground and was killed.

* * *

PARRAKEETS IN THE CITY.—A pair of Red-backed Parakeets (*Psephotus hæmatonotus*) has been for months frequenting the vacant pieces of ground between the Australian Wharf and the Victoria Dock. Possibly they roost in the roof of some of the adjacent buildings, probably the Gasworks.

* * *

FRONTAL SHRIKE TITS BREEDING NEAR CITIES.—This season (October) a pair of Shrike Tits built a nest and reared young in a tall gum tree overhanging the Yarra, not three miles from Melbourne. Another pair had a home in a tree above the kitchen at “Holmfirth,” Fulham, about six miles from Adelaide.

* * *

AN IBIS ROOKERY.—“Thousands of Ibises are nesting on Widgiewa station, and within ten miles of Urana. Their nests are on ‘ligrun’ bushes and on the higher tufts of ground

between, and are filled with eggs (or rather 4 or 5 in a nest) *, making 50 to 100 eggs on a bush. The birds are packed together on these bushes as close as they can stand, till nothing of the bushes or ground between can be seen for them. It is a wonderful sight to one who has never seen it before. The young birds began coming out about three days ago, but some are still laying."—CONWAY M. MACKNIGHT, Surgeon. 24/11/01.

From Magazines.

"REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, HELD AT MELBOURNE, 1900."—In connection with this volume, which has just been issued, it is to be regretted that for the want of the necessary funds the following papers are recorded only, and not published, viz. :—"Protective Colouration of Australian Birds and their Nests," and "Variation in the Colour of Australian Birds' Eggs," both by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S. ; "Notes on Some Desert Birds," by Mr. G. A. Keartland ; "Notes on a Collection of Birds from Western Australia," by Mr. R. Hall ; and "Reserve Fertility of Birds," by Mr. A. Sutherland, M.A. The loss of publicity of these interesting articles emphasizes the necessity for the existence of such a purely ornithological journal as *The Emu*.

While on the subject of the last Melbourne Congress of the A. A. A. S. it was perhaps an error of judgment in the "Hand-book" to have furnished old and obsolete names with such excellent descriptive matter as that on the "Birds of the Melbourne District." This is all the more remarkable seeing that at the previous (Sydney) meeting a "List" of Australian birds' names, both technical and vernacular, was adopted by the Association and afterwards published.

* * *

A NICE POINT.—At the Sale police court four lads were charged with being in possession of Swans' eggs, contrary to the provisions of the *Game Act*. The first case was that of George Palethorpe, who pleaded guilty to having 55 eggs in his possession. He was fined 1s. for each egg, or 55s. in all. The other three defendants, who were in company with Palethorpe, were defended by Mr. G. Wise, who objected that, as Palethorpe had been convicted of having the 55 eggs, the other defendants could not also be convicted for having them. Mr. Cresswell, P.M., said the objection was fatal, and dismissed the cases against the three, adding that if they had all been charged collectively they would have been convicted.—*The Argus*, 20/7/01.

* Usual complement 2 to 4. —EDS.