

The young leave the nest within a short time of hatching, and hide at once if danger threatens. If one remains quiet for a few moments, the soft whistle reveals the hiding place, and they are easily captured.

Nothing is more interesting than the helpless Pukeko of a day or two old, with its dark bluish-black down, with silvery hair-like tips, and ivory bill.

North-Western Notes.

BY THOMAS CARTER, POINT CLOATES, W.A.

ON the 10th September I paid a flying trip north in the hope of finding eggs of *Eremiornis carteri*, but was unfortunately too late. When driving in a buggy through the thick, scrubby grey-leaved species of saltbush, in which one finds this bird, and which, growing from 3 to 4 feet in height, is very difficult stuff to "wade" through, I noticed an old bird fly out. On going to the spot I found a nest, which I have no doubt belonged to this species. It was built among the twigs, about one foot from the ground, and was a bulky structure measuring about 4½ inches across the top, and 3 inches in depth. The top was quite open and somewhat deep. The nest was built of dry grass and fibre, some of the latter being of a texture like loose twine. Lining there was none, but several dead saltbush leaves were in the bottom, having probably fallen in. Inside the nest and below it were numerous elytræ of beetles, mostly of a small shield beetle. The old bird perhaps resorted to the nest to eat them. I have noticed remains of black beetles in the crops of specimens shot before. The young birds appeared to have only recently left the nest. The bird I shot was a male.

A little farther on, the same day, I saw a family party of Rufous-crowned Emu Wrens (*Stipiturus ruficeps*). One of the young birds I shot had apparently just left the nest, and it had no trace of the bright rufous crown of the adult bird.

It appears, therefore, that both these species lay about August, or it may depend much on the rains. This is a somewhat dry season.

With reference to Mr. A. W. Milligan's lately described *Mirafra woodwardi*, when driving about 50 miles inland from here on the 30th and 31st of October last year, I noticed some small Larks of a very rufous colour that were strange to me, and I shot three or four. They were feeding in the short grass by the road, and when disturbed rose with a rising and falling flight to settle again not far away, and lie close; and they seemed rarely to perch on bushes, though I noticed them doing this last month, when I saw numbers of them in the same locality.

On reading descriptions of *M. horsfieldi* and *M. secunda*, I did not feel satisfied that my birds quite tallied with them, and mentioned, casually, in a letter to Mr. A. J. Campbell, that I had

shot some very rufous Larks, and thought of washing a skin to see if the colour was permanent or only dust off the red soil they seem to haunt. However, I did not do this, nor yet send a skin away for proper identification as I had intended, until I heard of Mr. Milligan's description, when I sent a skin on to Mr. Woodward, and have just heard from him that Mr. Milligan examined it, and says it is identical with his species.

Protective Colouration of Australian Birds and Their Nests.

PART I.

BY D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S., &C., MELBOURNE.

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THIS is possibly rather a hackneyed subject, but always an interesting one, and which is so frequently brought under one's notice when in the country that I thought a few brief observations upon instances which have come under my notice may be of interest to some; and in writing these notes I am presuming that birds have the same vision as ourselves, and that what would be difficult for us to see would be equally so for them, and personally I think that is the case.

It may be accepted as a general rule that in birds that build their nests in more or less exposed situations the female is generally protected by her sombre colour—as, for instance, the Birds of Paradise and many others; and in bright-coloured birds, where the female does not differ much from the male—as, for instance, Cockatoos, Parrots, Kingfishers, and Bee-eaters—the birds nest in holes, either in trees or on the ground; and when the colour of the male bird harmonizes with its surroundings, and is practically the same as the female, he generally takes his place on the eggs as well as the female bird—as, for instance, Emus, Frogmouths or Podargus, Nightjars, Green Fruit Pigeons, and sea-birds; and it is a rare thing for any bird which nests in the open to have a brightly coloured back, that being the only part exposed to view from above when a bird of prey may be passing over. But we must remember that there are always exceptions, and we cannot make a hard and fast rule. We may now briefly mention some of the families. Eagles, Hawks, and other birds of prey hardly require any protection. The male and female differ little in colour, but the latter is the larger. Their nests are generally large and conspicuous, and apparently no effort is made to conceal them. The same applies to Crows, Ravens, and Crow-Shrikes (*Strepera*), and I have never yet seen a bird of prey attack them. In Rifle Birds (*Ptilorhis*) the males are very bright and showy, but the females dull brown. Their nests are constructed of twigs and leaves, often with pieces of cast