

coasts and littorals is almost unvisited by man, the Pigeons therefore having it virtually as an unmolested preserve, unless from their natural hereditary enemies.

In conclusion, I have carefully gone through the papers forwarded by you, and find that their contents and opinions, in addition to personal knowledge and experience, fail to make it clear to me against whom, or what, the Pigeons in these millions are in need of protection, therefore my opinion is most decidedly antagonistic towards it, for the simple reason that really there is nothing tangible to protect them from.

Stray Feathers.

FROM NORTHERN SIBERIA.—Mr. A. R. Reid, Hobart, saw a flock of about 1,000 Little Stints (*Limonites ruficollis*) at the South Arm, Storm Bay, Hobart, on 9th November. He shot three, and they were all females.—D. LE S.

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I OBSERVED a flock of about 30 Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) flying over North Melbourne this morning, coming from the south, and flying low, as is customary with them. It is the first time I have noticed these birds so far south.—A. MATTINGLEY. 22/9/03.

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LARGE CLUTCHES OF EAGLES.—I took a trip on the run the other day, during the wet weather, and in addition to other nests noticed two of the Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*), each containing five young. Never found one before with more than three, and often only two eggs.—SEP. ROBINSON. Buckingham (N.S.W.), 5/10/03.

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AN AUTHENTIC KOEL'S EGG.—A medical friend, a collector, shot a male and female Koel (*Eudynamis cyanocephala*). He collected the female and put her on the ground to go for the fallen male. The female, to his surprise, dropped an egg and flew. I have the egg, and he has the male bird.—(DR.) F. HAMILTON-KENNY. Hospital, Gympie, Q., 11/11/03.

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A FLYCATCHER IN A CUSTOMS SHED.—In the A.U.S.N. Shed, Australian Wharf, Melbourne, there has been for two or three months a White-shafted Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*). It pipes merrily at times on the rafters of the shed, and flits up and down catching flies (which are numerous, attracted by the fruit, &c., cargoes), regardless of the busy throng beneath.—A. J. CAMPBELL. 23/10/03.

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GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH A "BIRD OF PREY."—Last season Mr. Andrew M'Gregor, of Essendon, Victoria, shot a little Chestnut-bellied Quail, which fell close by a tree not far from where he was, but before it was possible for him to secure it, a Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Collyriocincla harmonica*) picked it up, and flying into

a tree, commenced to make a meal off it. I knew these Shrike-Thrushes occasionally took the eggs of other birds, but did not think they would take a bird as large as a Quail.—D. LE SOUËF.

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FLYCATCHERS IN A CITY.—In a busy part of Sydney lately, near the Wharf, heavily laden lorries and other vehicles were continually passing. In a recess close at hand a small tree grew, and in it lived a pair of Black and White Fantails (*Rhipidura tricolor*). They seemed perfectly at home in their noisy quarters, and caught flies off the lorry horses passing by, as if they thought they had been driven past for that purpose. This shows how tame these charming birds become when not persecuted.—A. S. LE SOUËF. Zoological Gardens, Sydney.

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"TAILS" OF FANTAILS' NESTS.—With regard to the nest of the Western Fantail (*Rhipidura preissi*), I was examining one the other day, and noticing the usual apparently unfinished condition of the end of the spout, with the solid impervious construction of the nest generally, it suggested itself to me (the nest in question being a trifle damp) that the spout was in reality a spout, allowing the escape of any water received (as during rain) which could not get through the solid nest itself. The raggedness of the end would then serve an obvious purpose.—H. E. HILL. Guildford (W.A.), 16/9/03.

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PARDALOTES IN FAIRY MARTIN'S NESTS.—It is known the Pardalotes occasionally use Fairy Martins' old nests, but I am not sure that that trait has been recorded of the Black-headed Pardalote (*P. melanocephalus*). One of these birds last September occupied a deserted Martin's nest under the verandah of one of the outbuildings. By some chance one of the old birds got caught by the feathers of the back of the head at the end of the spout, and was found hanging there dead. A week afterwards we pulled the nest down and there were half-fledged young in it, also dead.—CHAS. A. BARNARD. Coomooboolaroo (Q.), 8/11/03.

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BIRDS BLOWN TO SEA.—I was informed lately by Mr. Rea, of Caramut, Victoria, that when a very severe bush fire swept over that district from the North two years ago, hundreds of birds, such as Cockatoos, Parrots, Cuckoos, Acanthizas, Fantails, and many others, were blown out to sea by the northerly gale and fire combined, and, apparently being unable to return against the wind, got drowned, the ocean beach in that neighbourhood being for many days afterwards strewn with dead birds.—D. LE SOUËF.

[Similar instances are on record. Fire and flood cause many faunal forms to be "lost at sea."—EDS.]



A Devoted Mother.

Dead Black and White Fantail (*Rhipidura tricolor*) and Young, found after a flood.

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLES (*Uroaëtus audax*).—Hearing that these birds were unusually numerous in the Hughenden district (N.Q.), I wrote for information to Mr. J. H. Frith, of Hughenden station, who kindly gave me the following details. In eight months of this year they had poisoned one thousand and sixty (1,060) Eagles; at one lamb he had known as many as 12 or 14 to be poisoned. Poisoning an already poisoned dingo one morning, he gathered eighteen dead Eagles from about it in the afternoon. I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that Hughenden station alone must have lost some thousands of lambs by Eagles this year.—FRED. L. BERNEY. Richmond (N.Q.), 30/10/03.

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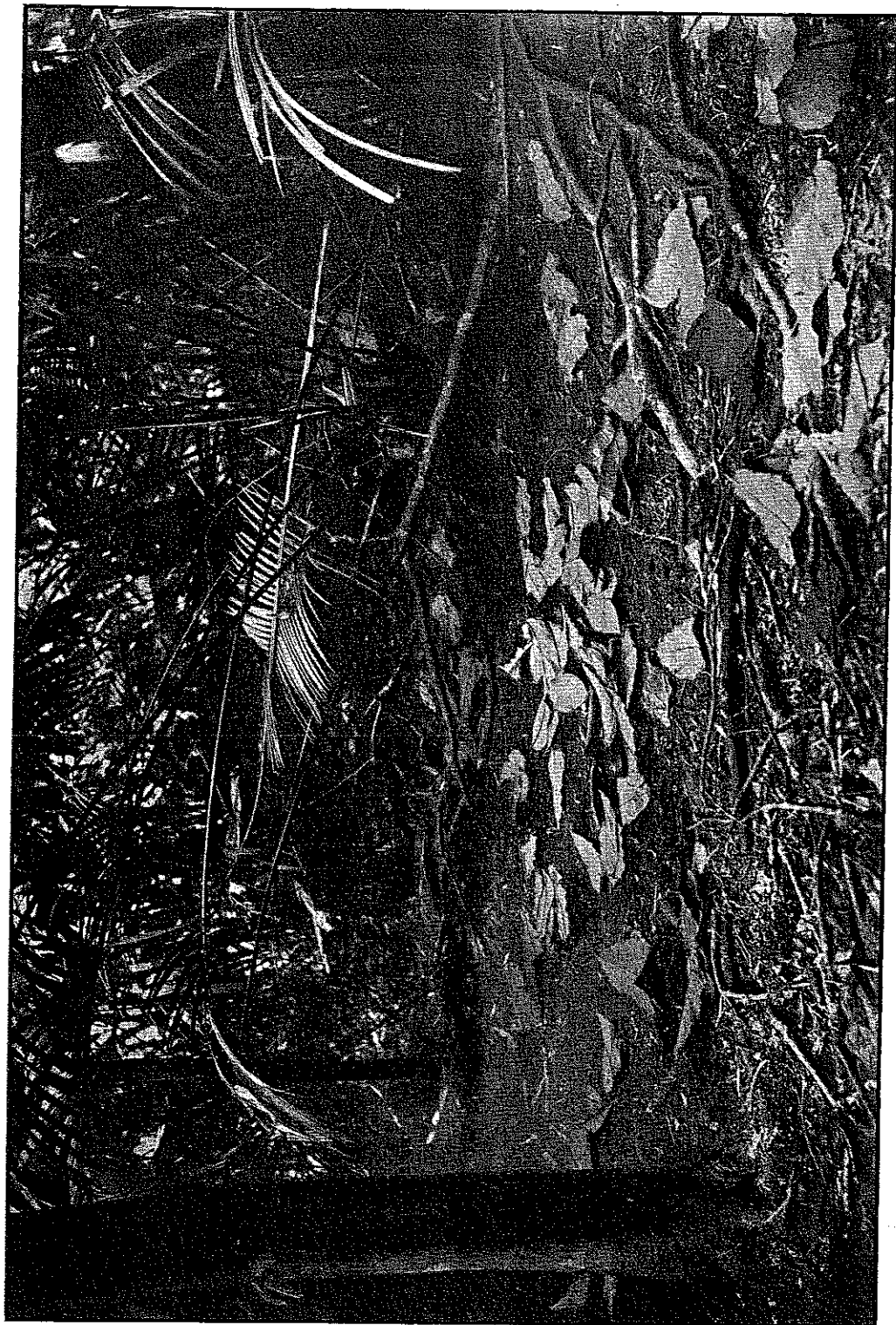
REGENT-BIRDS.—I have just had an opportunity of handling a pair of Regent-Birds (*Sericulus melinus*) in the flesh. They were obtained by Mr. W. L. May on the Blackall Range, Queensland, preserved in formalin, and then forwarded for stuffing by post. The colour of the eye struck me as interesting. The male has a light yellow iris and the female a dark brown. It is probable that the yellow of the male is a rich orange, and has faded in the formalin. The birds have soft gizzards and were full of a substance which resembled a fruit pulp, with a large proportion of small black seeds with hard coverings. I am not able to identify the seeds by their appearance, so purpose planting them to see if they will grow.—CLIFFORD COLES. Melbourne, 13/10/03.

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DEVOTION OF A BLACK AND WHITE FANTAIL.—My friend, Miss Hood, of Merrang, Hexham, Victoria, found the nest of the Black and White Fantail (*Rhipidura tricolor*) built on the branch of a willow tree, which had been covered by flood waters. She was surprised to find in the nest the skeleton forms of three little ones, all with their heads in an upright position and their mouths wide open, and standing over them was the dried-up form of their devoted mother, with her wings outspread and her feet holding on to the edge of the nest. She had evidently died endeavouring to protect her young from the overwhelming flood, and such an act of devotion well deserves recording. The sketch is from a drawing made by Miss Hood at the time.—D. LE SOUËF.

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CRAFTY CROWS.—Crows are crafty and intelligent birds, especially those individuals which forage around homesteads, but few would give them credit for sagacity similar to that shown by dogs in burying food for future use. For two years past I was puzzled to account for the number of eggs of the domestic fowl and duck that I and others found about the cultivation paddocks buried to the general level of the surrounding land, and in most cases neatly covered with earth. Sometimes the rain would wash away the covering and leave the egg exposed; at other times the egg would be revealed by being trodden upon.



Play-ground of the Tooth-billed Bower-bird (*Scenopæus dentirostris*).

FROM A PHOTO. BY E. M. CORNWALL.

On 28th September the operator was discovered. A White-eyed Crow had devoured one egg and was busy in the act of covering up in newly ploughed land the second egg, unbroken.—GEO. GRAHAM. Scott's Creek (Vict.)

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PLAYGROUND OF THE TOOTH-BILLED BOWER-BIRD.—I am sending you a photo. of the finest playground we found of the Tooth-billed Bower-Bird (*Scenopæus dentirostris*). You will see it was situated amongst a dense tangle of lawyer-palms, and we had to clear one side to get at it with the camera. The playground was large, very clean, and I counted 75 leaves on it, all fresh. At the back, amongst the sticks, may be noticed some of the withered leaves which had been thrown out. The following note may be of interest. In the morning all the birds were noticed low down amongst the scrub, quite close to their playground, whilst towards sundown they were invariably perched high up amongst the topmost branches of the trees, but still in the immediate neighbourhood of the playground. They were always very noisy.—E. M. CORNWALL. Cairns (N.Q.), 4/10/03.

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A PAINTED FINCH (*Emblema picta*) IN CAPTIVITY.—I caught a number of Painted Finches in the M'Donnell Ranges by snaring them with single horsehair, but for some unaccountable reason they all died with the exception of one within 24 hours. I obtained all the native-grass seeds and had the ordinary shop-seeds as well, took every possible care of the birds, but they died so rapidly that I gave them up in despair. The single bird I brought down to Adelaide, and it is thriving in the open-air aviary. There was a nest not 10 yards from my fireplace when I left the camp. The eggs are white, and the nest the coarsest of any Finch I know, one peculiarity of it being that a number of pellets of clay are used in the foundation. I watched the nest built from the first stick. Small sticks are used more than grass, and the nest is much smaller than that of any of our ordinary Finches.—HORACE J. PAGE. Mitcham (S.A.), 15/10/03.

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RED-CROWNED LORIKEET (*Ptilosclera versicolor*).—As very little appears to be known concerning the nidification of this pretty little Lorikeet, it may interest ornithologists to hear that I saw two broods, three and four respectively, that were taken from their nests—hollow spouts in trees, I understand—about the 15th September; they had been in hand a week when I saw them, and the oldest lot would, I should think, just be able to fly a short distance had they had their liberty. They appeared to differ but little in their plumage from adult birds, excepting that the red crown was entirely wanting; three individuals, though, showed the first indications of it by a narrow band of red across the forehead. They were thriving on a mixture of

oatmeal and honey. These birds were obtained on Cambridge Creek, some 30 miles north of Richmond township, Flinders River, North Queensland.—FRED. L. BERNEY. Richmond (N.Q.)

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SOUTHERLY RANGE OF LONG-BILLED COCKATOO.—In continuation of Mr. Geo. Graham's previous note (*The Emu*, vol. iii., p. 116), he states, under date 15th September:—"The most of our White Cockatoos have been absent since midwinter, leaving us with about ten only, with no 'Long-bills' among them." However, at a later date he says:—"In my immediate locality there are the usual six or eight Corellas, and on the 16th October, between Curdie's River and Cobden, I was surprised to see a large flock. I counted seventy without counting all of them. They must find the food supply suitable to their requirements, and will probably in the future become as numerous here as in the north. I have observed during the last twenty years that all new comers among the birds are spring and summer visitors before they become established as permanent residents."—W. J. STEPHEN.

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RUFIOUS *v.* BLACK BUTCHER-BIRDS.—Last Sunday morning, whilst passing a grove of mango trees near the State Nursery at Kamerunga, my attention was drawn to a Black Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus quoyi*), and surmising that he had a nest in one of the trees, I went and investigated, with the result that the nest was discovered in the last tree of the grove; I was quickly up alongside the nest, which contained three nearly full-fledged young ones, and you can judge the interest I felt when I found that two of them were *brown* and the other jet *black*. I have got the interesting little strangers at home and they give every promise of being easily reared, as they eat voraciously. Should they die I will put the bodies in spirits and send them to you, but if they live I will probably take them to Melbourne with me and present them to the Zoological Gardens, Melbourne. It is very evident to me that, whilst the adult birds of each sex are quite black, the male being black at all ages, the female's immature plumage is brown. I am particularly anxious to rear these young ones so as to ascertain at what age the females take on the black plumage.—E. M. CORNWALL. Cairns (N.Q.), 27/10/03.

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SOCIABILITY OF BIRDS.—Early in October, when strolling along a river bank, I found in a willow tree overhanging the water several birds nesting. They included the Restless Flycatcher (*Sisura inquieta*) and the Black and White Fantail (*Rhipidura tricolor*), the two nests being about 5 feet apart, and a Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*). The nest of the Restless Flycatcher had three eggs in, and that of the Fantail four. I could not see into the Magpie-Lark's nest, but the bird was sitting.

On another occasion, on a small blackwood tree, I saw the occupied nests of a White-plumed Honey-eater (*Ptilotis penicillata*) and Black and White Fantail, and on an adjoining eucalyptus tree a Magpie-Lark and White-fronted Heron (*Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ*), which is a common night bird here. I see the Grallina and Black and White Fantail nesting close to one another, and notice that the same thing has been observed in Queensland and elsewhere. Such facts show how fond many birds are of nesting in company. It is not only "birds of a feather" which exhibit this gregarious instinct.—S. F. MANN. Caramut (Vict.), 20/10/03.

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WESTERN (VICTORIA) NOTES.—Mountain Ducks (*Casarca tadornoides*) are fairly plentiful in the open country at this time of the year, of course in pairs. I counted twenty-one young ones with a pair the other day, and one of my *employés* found a nest with twenty-one eggs in on 10th August. These must be maximum clutches. I found a nest of the Yellow-rumped Tit (*Acanthiza*) the other day, in which a Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalix*) had laid an egg in the upper story, which, of course, is not used for rearing the family. There were no eggs in the lower compartment. On several occasions I have noticed Ravens combining together to pull a log or heavy piece of bark over, to obtain grubs below. Occasionally one knowing Raven only looks on, thereby getting unfairly an unlucky grub before the others get a chance. Many Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) have nested on the ground this year (1903), generally on a tussock of grass or in a bunch of Cape weed. Suitable trees for nesting in are getting scarce.—R. A. D. HOOD. Merrang, Hexham.

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NOTE ON THE BREEDING OF THE HARRIER.—With reference to Mr. Le Souëf's note, Part 4, vol. ii., on the breeding of the Harrier (*Circus gouldi*) at Cullenswood, those birds have resorted to the same lagoon for many years past, varying their time for nesting slightly in accordance with the season, whether wet or dry, so that the locality is sufficiently free from water. Some years back the nests used to be on some slight eminence, of which there are several at the nesting-site, caused by the accumulation of silt round tussocks among the reeds; but now they usually resort to the dead level of the lagoon. Originally the ancestors of that pair of Harriers bred in a small lagoon of about 3 acres in extent much nearer the homestead, but after it was drained they forsook that site and took to the present one. During the breeding season these Harriers are destructive to poultry, coming about the houses in search of chickens for their young, and every year we lose a few from our yards. Young rabbits also form part of their prey, and taking them all the year round they do more good than harm—certainly in a rabbit-infested district. Before the

breeding season it is their habit to soar high in the air, similarly to the Brown Hawk (*Hieracidea*), uttering a shrill scream. In all open, marshy districts these birds form the most attractive objects of their family, as they "course" gracefully over the land, often for considerable distances, with outstretched wings, in search of their prey, and at such times no doubt often pick up an unwary Quail.

The Harrier, with its long tarsus, makes a good object lesson of the manner in which birds of prey use their talons. When pursued by Magpies, as they so often are in the breeding season, the latter coming up behind them, and often above them, with great speed, the Harrier will, when taken unawares, perhaps, turn around on its side and strike out the long leg and talons nearer its pursuer with lightning-like rapidity, the Magpie sheering off in its dash, and just getting clear of the sharp claws aimed at it. The whole performance can be seen very plainly, owing to the length of leg possessed by this genus.—W. V. L.

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CLARKE ISLAND (BASS STRAIT) NOTES.—The breeding season for birds in the Strait may be dated from the beginning of August, except in the freshwater birds, such as Ducks, Swans, &c. Owing to heavy rainfall this season, it was to be expected that an increase in the number of clutches of the above-mentioned birds would follow, but on the contrary Musk-Ducks are only now preparing to lay, also Teal and Swans. Their nests are in different stages of building. I presume the excessive rainfall has inundated their former nesting-sites—a fact which may possibly account for their building a little later.

Cape Barren Geese (*Cereopsis novæ-hollandiæ*) are laying in large numbers this season. I have seen as many as 30 nests on two islands. Last year it was almost impossible to get any eggs, which led one to think that the birds had departed elsewhere to breed, so we must attribute it to nature, which often ordains that both the animal and vegetable kingdom should be less prolific in some seasons than in others.

The Black Duck's (*Anas superciliosa*) nest is very difficult to find. I have never found the eggs myself, but have known of others doing so, and have also seen the fledglings. This species prefers to build along the banks of creeks, as distinct from lake bank sites, and generally among dead rushes or at the base of a hollow tree. The Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*) is a very wary fellow. At the crack of a stick, when one is close to his nest, he will slide gently off and reappear 100 feet away from the spot. The nest of this bird is made of small round reeds, with sides and roof to it, also a small opening in the side for the parent to pass through. In the nest will usually be found from two to four eggs.

A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*) has occupied a small blue-gum thicket on Clarke Island for the last twenty

years, and in spite of their eyrie being burnt by bush fires four times, they this year still retain the same spot and are now hatching the eggs. If robbed when the eggs are fresh they will almost always lay again in the course of a month. Have just examined the eyrie of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaëtus leucogaster*) on Cape Barren Island, but the birds had just completed building. This species is rather rare here, and consequently it is almost impossible to get the eggs, their nests, when found, being sometimes inaccessible. It is a more suspicious bird than the Wedge-tail, and if often robbed will breed elsewhere. One will often see hanging from the eyrie birds, fish, rats, &c., while at the bottom of the nest there will be a perfect bed of bones.

The Whistling Shrike-Thrush (*Collyriocincla rectirostris*) is about in great numbers, and among the shrubs their bark nests are in different stages of construction. I have not seen any Swifts as yet, and do not expect them until the middle of September, when they appear here in thousands, only stopping, however, for a few weeks.

Only one of the Honey-eaters is laying at present—the Fulvous-fronted one (*Glycyphila fulvifrons*), which builds in small bushes about 2 feet from the ground. Its nest is made of small twigs, &c., the eggs being white with a few small brown spots at the larger end. I saw a beautiful bird of this family on Cape Barren Island—the Tasmanian or Crescent Honey-eater (*Lichmera australasiana*), which flits about very gently, making a slight cracking noise with its wings. Brown Quail have been here in thousands during the months of May, June, and July, but have now almost all gone, except the usual number that are always here.—J. D. MACLAINE. September, 1903.

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THE BIRDS OF ZANZIBAR (EAST AFRICA).—I will give you a sketch of the birds I shot on the fine island of Zanzibar. This island, about 40 miles long by 20 miles wide, is very rich and fertile, and covered by a dense mass of vegetation—cocoa palms, magnificent mango trees, bananas, papaw, jack fruit, and a dozen other fruits, including oranges, indigenous to the island, a most luscious and delicious fruit, very thin-skinned. Some of the country is quite park-like in appearance, with huge mangoes and stately cocoanut palms dotted about, and long waving grass; other parts are a mass of virgin jungle, all matted together by vines and creepers of many varieties. Hence you may draw a fair conclusion as to the variety of birds that would be found here.

To commence with *Corvidæ*. I have noticed a large black Crow, but have been unable to procure it; it seems identical with the African Rook. The White-necked Raven (*Corvultur albicollis*) is very plentiful, and forms great scavenger parties all over the island. I noticed many of the Shrike family, also collected several of the *Campophaga*. In the middle of the day, when the heat is at its most intense power, it is hot here. I have

stood under a giant mango tree, with its immense head of dark, thick foliage, and have shot no less than eleven species of birds from its branches without hardly moving. They seem to take refuge here during the hottest hours of the day from the sun's fierce rays. Several species of Cuckoo-Shrike inhabit the island. Flycatchers are very strongly represented, and one of the most common is one of the Paradise species, with two very long tail feathers in the male; head and neck a rich lead colour; breast white; wings, back, and tail rich brown or rufous; and a very decided crest. They are very noiseless. I have never heard them utter a sound, and they were very plentiful amongst the clove trees, where they kept very close to the ground, capturing many diurnal moths, to be found in great numbers there. Many species of Grass-Warblers and Reed-Birds are to be found amongst the high grass—some very, very small ones. The family *Nectarariidæ* are very well represented here, some of most beautiful and striking plumage. One of the most common is the Scarlet-breasted Sun-Bird, which is dispersed all over the island. I shot the same bird in half a dozen places on the East Coast. This bird I have seen in dozens at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon congregating in a flowering tree, and have noticed he is a most pugnacious little chap. The males will fight most determinedly, and I have seen them attack birds three times their own size. The general plumage is velvety brown with a purple sheen through it; a patch of metallic green on forehead and throat; the chest and throat or lower part of the throat a deep scarlet. Although I have seen and collected one species of *Zosterops* nearly all the way up the mainland, I have not seen any on the island; perhaps it may not be the time of the year for them, and they only visit here at stated times. Two species of Swallow have been seen—one a mouse-coloured, small one, which is very numerous. I have also seen the white-breasted one which is found on the mainland. I shot several specimens of the Pipits which I take to be the Tawny Pipit, described by Woodward, if I remember rightly, as *Anthus rufulus*. I shot this bird at Lake St. Lucia, but did not meet with it north of Mozambique; I feel sure it is the same bird. Finches are well represented on this island, like the mainland, and I noticed that the species known as the South African Canary is distributed in great numbers from the Cape peninsula to this island. I saw it and shot specimens at Delagoa Bay, on the Zambesi, Mozambique, Pomba Bay, and Dar-es-salaam, and now here. I procured the rare little Yellow Weaver-Bird here, also its eggs and nest. This bird is found on the coast, but is represented by Layard as being a very rare bird; in its habits it seems to take the place of the black-faced variety, found all over South Africa, and builds a nest very peculiar in shape. The eggs are much paler in colouring and show spots. In shape they are like the Bishop-Bird's eggs, but not such a dark blue. I think this species is called *capensis*. I have not seen a true Lark on the island, and only the one species of Pipit as aforesaid

described. Night birds seem conspicuous by their absence, and I fancy there can be but few, if any, on the island. A gentleman who has lived on the island for years tells me that he has only seen two Owls during his residence here. Of course the terrible fever of destroying must possess him, and although the poor birds had taken up their abode on his home he destroyed them for the sheer sake of killing. I have shot several Kingfishers here. One species, a very small one, but a most elegant bird, keeps very closely to the reeds and rushes and it is with great difficulty one can get them out. Strange to say, although Hornbills are fairly plentiful on the coast, not one species is to be found on the island. Possibly I should say I have not come across any and cannot get any information relating to them. I shot a very pretty little Kite, which seems to me to resemble our Black-shouldered variety, but might be the one described by Sharpe as the Blue Kite. I came across several large waterholes in the forests, many of which were half a mile long, generally not more than 200 yards wide, but in many places very deep. The lily plants growing in—in fact, covering—these waterholes were very fine; leaves two feet across, and the beautiful rich blue flowers the size of large tea-cups, the banks being fringed by high rushes. I could not induce the natives to go into these holes and had at last to go in myself. Still I have been rewarded, for I shot several strange water birds, a beautiful little Red-headed Duck, a very small Bittern, and several Nankeen Herons, as well as the African Jacana; also a Water-Crake like our Little Crake of Australia. It must suffice to say that I have shot about 100 birds on the island, of about 40 species, and have collected some fine bats and mammals, also flies, so you can see I am not idle. Am now about to start for the German East Coast again and make another attempt to go as far north as Lamu, to collect Waders in deep lakes and marshes there; then to work in to Lake Victoria Nyanza, and do Madagascar on my return.—S. A. WHITE. Zanzibar, East Africa, 24/8/03.

[Captain White has taken many photographs during his African travels. He sends one depicting a number of swarthy natives pushing his little ship through the surf at Zanzibar, preparatory to sailing for an island seldom visited.—EDS.]

From Magazines, &c.

IN *The Croydon Mining News* (14/8/03) a correspondent gives the following important information on the usefulness of the much-abused Crows in the Gulf of Carpentaria district:—"The most wonderful thing I have seen, and which I feel almost certain bids fair to put an entirely new aspect on the tick question, is the game the Crows are playing up here. I saw four instances of it in a journey of 40 miles, and the last clearly defined illustration, within a mile of the Vanrook homestead, amongst what I