

I was unhurt by the fall, thanks to the water, but I received a few scratches from the tree, principally about the wrists. My clothes were damped, but not my ardour, and I managed to send up the rope ladder, and re-ascended the tree, where I secured another snap-shot of the poor starvelings from a precarious coign of vantage.

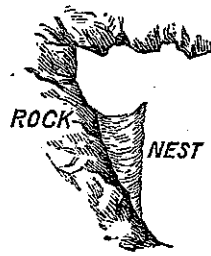
Nesting Place of Australian Swifts.

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

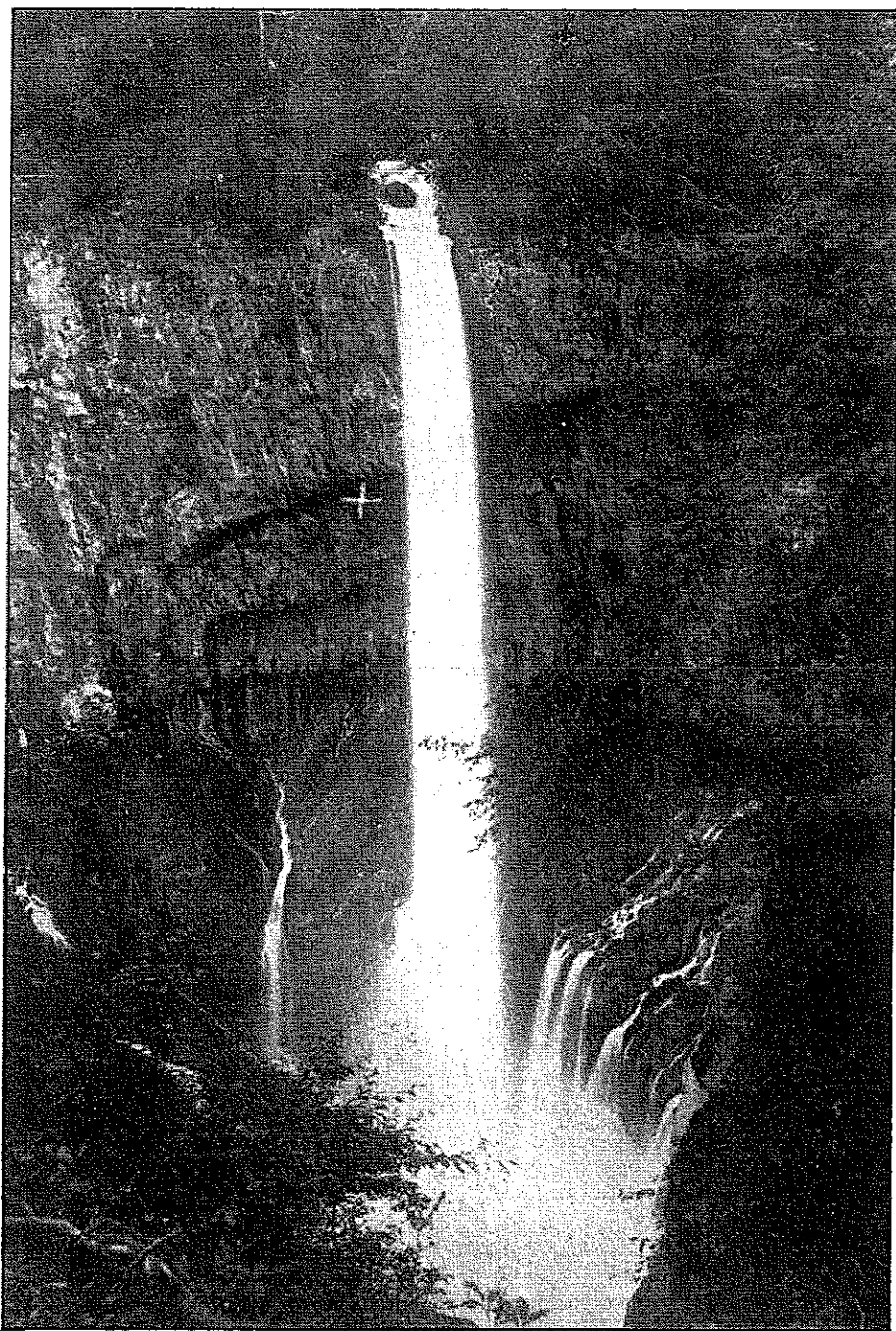
WHEN visiting Japan lately (25/7/07) in company with our member, Mr. R. A. D. Hood, I was enabled to visit the Kegon Waterfall, near Nikko. It is a beautiful cascade of about 270 feet in height and a considerable amount of water also comes out from the apparently conglomerate rock lying under the harder slate-like formation. We were told that in winter it almost ceased running. It drains the Chuzenji Lake, which is about half a mile away, and 4,375 feet above sea-level.

We were pleased to see many Spine-tailed (*Chaetura caudacuta*) and White-rumped Swifts (*Micropus pacificus*) circling round in the precipitous gorge beneath us, both close to the falling water and further down. Later, towards evening, they hunted for their winged prey well above the gorge. We noticed single birds every now and again darting down towards the overhanging wall of rock to a place under a jagged ledge (marked with a white cross in the photo.), and, bringing our strong field-glasses to bear on the spot, were delighted in being able to clearly distinguish three nests of the Spine-tailed Swifts. The White-rumped Swifts seemed to dart into holes or crevices, where they evidently had their nests, but we could not distinguish them. Of the three nests of the larger bird, two contained young, which we saw the parents feeding, and when so doing they clung on to the side of the nest for a brief moment; while the third had a bird sitting. The nests were large, and made of mud, evidently of two or three colours, and were built on a sloping wall of rock well under cover, thus—

As far as we could judge from the distance we were (about 150 yards) a nest is about a foot in depth externally by about 4 inches across on the top; the cup or egg cavity was evidently shallow, as the sitting bird was well exposed. We asked the natives living near if they had ever seen the birds roosting at night; they said "No," and had never seen them resting except when clinging to the sides of the cliff where their nests were built.



We were informed that when the young had all left their nests, and just before the annual migration commences to Australia, about the latter part of September and early in October,



Kegon Waterfall, Japan.
White Cross Showing Site of Spine-tailed Swifts' (*Chaetura caudacuta*) Nests.

the Japanese living at Nikko catch one of the birds, then choose an open spot where two or three trees are growing not far apart, and spread light nets from tree to tree, and then, fastening a long cord to the foot of the captive bird, allow it to fly about on the inner side of the nets. Other Swifts, both the Spine-tailed and White-rumped, are attracted by the captive, and, darting down towards it, often strike the nets, then fall to the ground. As their wings are so long, they cannot fly off the ground, and are left for the time being where they fall, to be gathered when the catching is over for the day. From sixty to one hundred are often caught in this way in one day. The larger species are used for eating, and are much appreciated by the Japanese, while the primary feathers of the wings are used for various purposes. The White-rumped Swift is too small for eating.

When we passed Hongkong, about 1st July, we saw both Swifts there. It is probable that they have many nesting places both in Japan and in China, but their choosing such steep, overhanging cliffs makes them difficult to approach. I have heard of three different such places in Japan.

Field Notes on Birds from Talbragar River, New South Wales.

BY THOS. B. AUSTIN, COBBORA.

PART II.

PIED CROW-SHRIKE (*Strepera graculina*).—Although this is a well-known bird all through the district, and at times very plentiful, it is a very rare thing to see them breeding here; only once have I observed them nesting. There were three young in the nest only a few days old. The nest was built in a large ironbark tree about two miles from the river. A few weeks later I took the young birds for pets, and, although they became very docile, they never learned to talk. It was simply marvellous the way they could catch anything (even stones) thrown within reach of them. These pets had a very unfortunate ending. When they were about twelve months old I noticed first thing every morning that they went for a long fly, some miles away from the house. It soon became very evident that they were trying to induce their wild relations to return with them. This they eventually succeeded in doing; but the wild birds made themselves too much at home in my fruit garden—the second morning after their arrival there was not a fig left on the trees. The wild birds became so tame I could not tell them from the pets, and they became so destructive I had to shoot the lot—an act which I did very reluctantly.

BLUE KINGFISHER (*Alcyon azurea*).—Although I have seen this bird on the Castlereagh River, 30 miles to the north of here, also along the Coodgebaong River, 30 miles to the south, I have no record of it being seen on the Talbragar River.

SACRED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon sanctus*).—These birds arrive in great numbers during the spring, when their loud, screeching cries may