

Additions to the "Handlist of the Birds of Australasia."

BY GREGORY M. MATHEWS, F.L.S., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

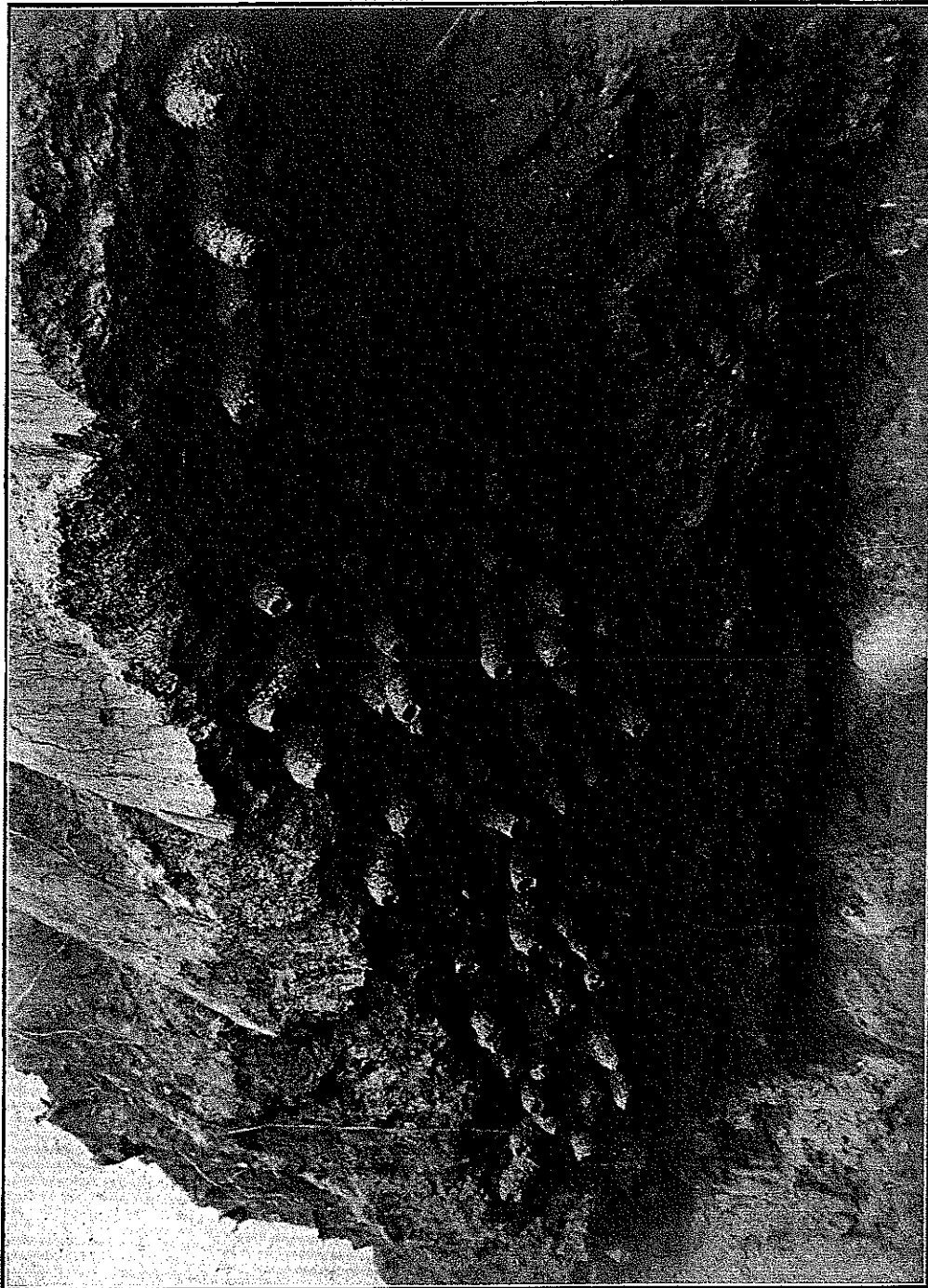
- 34A. *Geopelia shortridgei*, Grant, Bull.
B.O.C., xxiii., p. 73 ... Carnarvon, W.A.
- 36A. *Chalcophaps occidentalis*, North,
Vict. Nat., xxiv., p. 135 ... Pt. Keats, N.-W.A.
- 52A. *Ocydromus sylvestris*, Sclater ... Lord Howe Id.
- 331A. *Ptistes coccineopterus*, Gould (*cf.*
Math., Bull. B.O.C., xxi., p. iii.) ... N. & N.-W. Austr.
- 459A. *Pseudogerygone cantator*, Weather-
hill, *Emu*, ix., p. 26 ... S.-E. Queensland.
- 473A. *Poecilodryas albigularis*, Rothsch.
and Hart., Nov. Zool., xiv., p. 479 Cape York.
- 574A. *Acanthiza leighi*, Grant, Bull. B.O.C.,
xxiii., p. 73 ... Lithgow, N.S.W.
- 586A. *Sericornis balstoni*, Grant, Bull. }
B.O.C., xxiii., p. 72 ... } Bernier Id., Car-
narvon, W.A.
- 603A. *Malurus dulcis*, Math., Bull. B.O.C.,
xxi., p. 100 ... N.-W. Australia.
- 603B. *Malurus bernieri*, Grant, Bull. B.O.C., }
xxiii., p. 72 ... } Bernier Id., Car-
narvon, W.A.
- 611A. *Stipiturus mallee*, Campb., *Emu*, viii., }
p. 34 ... } Mallee district,
Victoria.
- 619A. *Amytornis varia*, Carter, *Vict. Nat.*,
xxv., p. 86 ... Broome Hill, W.A.
- 700A. *Neositta magnirostris*, Ingram, Bull.
B.O.C., xxi., p. 99 ... Inkerman, N.Q.
- 728A. *Pardalotus pallida*, Campb., *Emu*, }
viii., p. 142 ... } Coongan River,
N.-W. Australia
- 838A. *Ægintha minor*, Campb. (*cf.* Math.,
Bull. B.O.C., xxii., p. 24) ... North Queensland.
- 850A. *Oriolus affinis*, Gould ... N.-W. Australia.
- 853A. *Sphecotheres stalkerii*, Ingram, Bull. }
B.O.C., xxi., p. 100 ... } Mt. Elliot, Towns-
ville.

Stray Feathers.

FAIRY MARTIN (*PETROCHELIDON ARIEL*).—These nests (see Plate VI.) were built in May, 1908, during springlike weather. It then set in cold, and they were deserted until August, when the Martins returned and set up housekeeping again. The photograph was taken in September.—C. A. BARNARD. Coomooboolaroo, *via* Duaringa (Q.)

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PENGUIN ASTRAY.—An interesting find recently made on Rottnest Island, 12 miles north-west of Fremantle, was a



Nests of Colony of Fairy Martins (*Petrochelidon ariel*).

FROM A PHOTO. BY C. A. BARNARD.

specimen of the Crested Penguin (*Catarrhactes chrysocome*), which was picked up by Mr. Miller, of the Rottnest Signal Station. Mr. Otto Lippert, the taxidermist of the Western Australian Museum, happened to be collecting on the island, and he at once prepared the skin. This species of Penguin was first recorded for Western Australia by Mr. A. J. Campbell, in 1889, who secured one close to Hamelin Harbour, near Cape Leeuwin. The bird had never previously been seen on Rottnest Island.—C. P. CONIGRAVE. Perth (W.A.), 2/8/09.

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WOOD-SWALLOWS AS HONEY-EATERS.—In one of the recent issues of *The Emu* a correspondent refers to Wood-Swallows acting as honey-eaters. I can support his observations as follows:—During the month of August, about four years ago, I was camped a few miles out from Laverton (W.A.) About 8 o'clock one morning a flock of fully 200 Black-faced Wood-Swallows (*Artamus melanops*) came round the camp. They stopped for about an hour and then disappeared again, going north. During the whole of the time they stayed with us they were very busy feeding on the honey (presumably) from the flowers of a pretty red-flowering mulga (acacia?) * which was growing round the camp.—CHAS. G. GIBSON. Perth (W.A.)

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FOXES v. BIRDS.—In a letter received by me from Mr. Geo. Graham, A.O.U., of Scott's Creek, near Cobden (Vic.), he states that during the spring and summer of 1908-9 Pipits (*Anthus australis*) were, owing to the severe repression of foxes, enabled to bring up their broods in safety, and these birds were in greater numbers than in previous years. He was frequently cheered with the sight of young Pipits—a thing he had not seen since the advent of the fox. Mr. Graham observes that the fox, besides preying largely on both young and adult Magpies (*Gymnorhina leuconota*), is also the cause of the destruction of many of those birds at the hands of trappers, who find the Magpie a very effective bait, and one easily obtained.—W. J. STEPHEN. Robinson's-road, Hawthorn (Vic.), 3/8/09.

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WARTY-FACED HONEY-EATERS AND FRIAR-BIRDS.—During the late winter Warty-faced Honey-eaters (*Meliphaga phrygia*) have been unusually plentiful in this locality; ever since March last they have been with us in thousands. While riding through the bush one hears their peculiar notes all day long. I have never previously known the white box (*Eucalyptus hemiphloia*) to flower so freely; this probably accounts for the presence of

* Acacias usually have yellowish flowers.—EDS.

Honey-eaters in such numbers. Leather-heads or Friar-Birds (*Tropidorhynchus corniculatus*) have also remained with us during the whole winter. The Warty-faced Honey-eaters are now breeding, the first nest (with eggs) being observed on the 16th August; it was built in a heap of rubbish left by a flood in the bed of the Hunter River. Several other nests have since been seen in *Casuarina* trees growing on the river banks.—H. L. WHITE. Belltrees, N.S.W., 28/8/09.

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MIGRATION QUERIES.—Is anything definite known of the movements of the Ground-Parrakeet (*Pezoporus formosus*)? When walking through tussocky plains, about 50 miles from here, I used to flush them from almost beneath my feet. They would fly 40 or 50 yards, then drop again into the herbage. This was always about February or March. Never saw them in winter or spring. Where do they winter? Their flight seems very feeble—quite incapable of a long journey.

Pipit (*Anthus australis*).—There seems to be a movement of this species away from the coast in April and back in September, although quite a number stay with us also. Do they cross to the mainland, or are they merely nomadic? There appears to be nothing definite known as to the movements of this bird or of *Coracina parvirostris* (Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike) among naturalists over here, although Mr. Atkinson believes the *Coracina* winters on the east coast of this island.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport (Tas.), 7/8/09.

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RED-BROWED TREE-CREEPER.—From evidence gathered this year, I think it is safe to conclude that the Red-browed Tree-creeper (*Climacteris erythrops*) is a resident of south-eastern Victoria, and not a casual visitor, as I at first surmised. When I secured a specimen of this species on the 30th January, 1909, at Olinda, I thought it was probably a stray, for, although a sharp look-out was kept, no other birds of the species were noticed in the locality. I spent a week-end at Olinda, with other bird-observers, from the 5th to 7th June, and it was then that several pairs of birds were noticed. On a recent trip to Beaconsfield (about 20 miles south of Olinda), in company with Mr. F. E. Wilson, two pairs of these birds were seen and others heard calling. This was on 6th August. Mr. Wilson saw a pair at Beaconsfield about a month previously, in a different locality to those last observed. On every occasion when *C. erythrops* was observed it was noticed the timber was principally white and peppermint gums (eucalypts) and bordering a creek. The usual call of this bird is a silvery, bell-like trill of exceeding sweetness.

It is easily distinguished from the notes of *C. leucophæa*. With the majority of birds the male has a brighter and more conspicuous plumage than the female, but our Tree-creepers prove an exception to this rule. The female of *C. erythropis* has broad buff markings on the breast, which are quite absent in the male. There is also a difference between the sexes in *C. scandens* and *C. leucophæa*.—L. G. CHANDLER. Melbourne, 16/8/09.

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CLEVELAND (TASMANIA) NOTES. — The Flame-breasted Robins (*Petræca phænicea*) have been in this district throughout the winter this year. The Cuckoos left just before Easter week, but the Wood-Swallows (*Artamus sordidus*), Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*), and Tree-Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) remained until the week following. Very cold weather set in, and they abruptly left. The Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus parvirostris*) quitted these forest lands at the same time as the Swallows. The introduced bird, the English Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), was plentiful throughout the summer, and nested freely in the various gardens of the township. They have, however, been absent since March. These birds are very fond of the seeds of the cornflowers. I heard the Goldfinches were to be seen in great numbers at Latrobe, near Devonport, during June. During a climbing trip up Ben Lomond last Easter, I noticed a Pink-breasted Robin (*Petræca rhodinogastra*) among the dwarf trees on the slopes of the mountain. On the summit I flushed two Field-Wrens (*Calamanthus fuliginosus*) and saw a Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petræca leggii*), a pair of Mountain-Ducks (*Casarca tadornoides*) on Lake Baker (a lake on the mountain's plateau), and a fine Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaëtus audax*). This latter was not in sight until a dog belonging to our party started yelping because he had become separated from his master, who had climbed a rocky wall. The Eagle came flying up from the valley below and poised high above the dog, evidently wondering at the unusual noise. It was a picture to be remembered: the dog frantically trying to climb the rock; the human figures further up; and above all, in the clear air, the magnificent bird. After a while the latter soared higher and then flew away. A flock of twenty Miners (*Myzantha garrula*) have spent the winter in the back-yard here, and are fed daily with crumbs, &c., on the window-sill.—(MISS) J. A. FLETCHER. 30/7/09.

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NOTES ON THE BLACK-TAILED NATIVE-HEN (*MICRO-TRIBONYX VENTRALIS*).—I have noticed that several correspondents to "Nature Notes" in *The Argus* have written about this fascinating bird, which is so well known to us of the

northern plains. Most of the notes sent remarked on the appearance of these birds in large flocks before heavy rain, and it is on the "weather prophesying" powers and several other interesting habits of these birds that I am writing these notes. This graceful bird may often be seen, irrespective of flood or drought, in some parts of this district. Indeed, I have seen them on a practically dry creek, where waterholes were very few and far between. I first noticed in the latter end of 1907 that small flocks haunted the above-mentioned creek, which was getting drier every week. This, coupled with the fact that the birds showed no intention of going, roused my interest, and I gave more time to recording numbers than I had hitherto done. By the end of November, and during the first two or three weeks of the ensuing month, their numbers increased rapidly. True, we had numbers of grasshoppers, but, knowing that this bird is essentially a water-loving one, I began to ask myself whether it was possible that their increase meant an early hint of the drought. On the 26th December my views were confirmed, for we had the most bounteous rain that one engaged in pastoral pursuits could ever wish to see. Three inches fell, and very soon the creek and all watercourses were flooded. The birds increased, and evidently enjoyed themselves, but as soon as the creek stopped running, which it soon did, owing to the great heat of January and February, they left in companies almost as suddenly as they had come. Their departure was no mean omen, for we had real drought till the middle of the following May, when they returned again shortly before the break, although not in large numbers.

My next observations come into this present year. I write now from what we term the low country of the plains, as it is more or less composed of swamp and rough black, crab-hole cattle country. The above notes were taken on the same creek, but on the high red country of the plains. I find that there is a great difference in the two as regards the Hens, for, while they can be found at any time in larger or smaller numbers in the high country, it is only at certain times that they visit us here.

About 10th May, 1909, these birds came in vast numbers to the high country, and literally swarmed the banks of the creek. On the 13th a very heavy rain set in, and by the 15th 3 inches had fallen. As may be expected, the creek came down in tremendous flood in a couple of days, but scarcely had the rain started when the birds were to be seen in vast flocks congregated on the higher ground above flood-level, eating moths, flying ants, and other unfortunate water-logged insects. Though this place is only $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles as the Crow flies from the high country, the flood waters of first rains take three or four days to reach here, but before that time we had huge flocks of these birds

gathering. They stayed here in the inundated country till the flood waters drained away, and then they too left. From the end of May till the 20th of June there was not a single specimen to be seen here, although there were plenty to be seen in the high country along the creek. On the above date I was taking a stroll, looking at my grass and stock, when I came upon a huge flock of these birds, which had come down the creek apparently from the high country. I instantly thought of more rain, and, sure enough, on the 23rd we had a fall of 77 points. This brought the creek down in flood again, and the birds were here, just as they were previously, in large flocks, and stayed only till the waters subsided. Since that date we have had continuous rains, and this part is practically under water all round, but I have seen no sign of these "forecasters" since that flood. I conclude that they only appear in dryish spells before a flood or heavy rain. Although their coming and going is practically instantaneous, from observations (if it is the same body seen) I think that they come from the north, although, in the last-mentioned flood, if they came from the high country they travelled from the south-east to north-west. In May I was able to make the following observations, which might prove interesting to ornithologists:—Thursday, 20th May.—Round the house under water on the south-east and east side, and here were to be seen tremendous flocks of these birds. Roughly estimating, as one does a flock of sheep, there must have been anything between 300 and 400 Hens. I was hiding behind a hedge, and was within 20 yards of the nearest birds. When feeding, every now and then one or two of these birds will run round in a small circle, violently flapping their wings, and then end up by running swiftly with both wings outspread, but motionless, and necks stretched forward. They will then come to a dead stop. The running bird generally stops by another one which is feeding, and that one instantly takes up the running, so during feeding there is generally one on the run. My opinion is that they do this in order to disturb hidden insects, although the ground was very wet. Other birds were in deeper water, immersing themselves time after time. Then, coming out, after plunging the head and shoulders under the water, they would shake themselves and repeat the performance. Other birds were running up a stout gum-tree, standing at an angle of about 70 degrees. These would perch on the nearly vertical trunk, and then fly off it again. They did not seem to me to be able to cling on for long. When feeding they were fairly quiet, but every now and then one would give a peculiar sharp cry. Their *menu* consisted chiefly of small black crickets, which are washed out of the cracks in the ground in countless numbers.—E. J. CHRISTIAN. Wingi Park, Milloo P.O., *via* Prairie (Vic.), 30/7/09.