

feeding amongst the leaves in the bushy trees, owing to their greenish tinge, and also because they do not fly about much. They appear to have a decided preference for country where the timbers of the forest and scrub meet, intermix, and form a sort of jungle. A few of their neat but old cup-shaped nests were found, placed in ferns and vines only a few feet from the ground, yet they often build very much higher. Nine years ago I found these birds very plentiful in the Gosford district, but since then, I am sorry to say, their numbers have become considerably lessened. In the near future these and other of our native birds will be a thing of the past about Gosford as well as other places, if the "juvenile pea-rifle bird-killing crusade" is still allowed by the Government authorities to so openly carry on its wanton and ruthless destruction. Just below our camp the Bell-Birds chimed sweetly all day as they fed in the bushy branches of the blackbutt and blue gum (eucalypt) saplings on a slope beside the scrub, and the loud crack of the Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*), the pulsating, buzz-like sound of Jardine's Caterpillar-eater (*Edoliisoma jardinii*), the loud call of the Roller or Dollar-Bird (*Eurystomus pacificus*), the very peculiar whistle or call of the Ground-Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*), as well as the clear ringing notes of the Grey Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*), were all pleasant music to us.

At night the Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*), and White-throated Nightjar (*Eurostopodus albugularis*) often called in proximity to our camp, and on New Year's Eve, in the stillness of midnight, a Koel (*Eudynamys cyanocephala*) "cooe-ed" the old year out and the new year in. A person who has been living in the district for over fifty years informed me that the Koel was known to him as the "Christmas-Bird," as it usually started to put in an appearance and call about Christmas.

Like many portions of the rich scrubs on the eastern coast, those of the Gosford district are still being rapidly cut down, burnt off, and completely demolished, and the farmers and orchardists are all busily tilling the fertile land and putting in various crops. In time, and before long, the scrub-frequenting birds must move to other parts, where they will probably become more concentrated, provided the pea-rifle fiends and ruthless sportsmen do not slaughter them.

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### Stray Feathers.

**Eagles.**—About two months ago I saw two large Eagles (*Uroaëtes audax*) near the Werribee Gorge, Victoria, and estimated the wing-spread of each at 10 feet. In the following week one of the birds was shot by the boundary rider, and was measured by Mr. Robert Honnan, pastoralist and owner of the station (late Staughton's). The wings measured 11 feet from tip to tip. Part of the plumage was nearly jet black. The remaining Eagle still haunts the locality.—W. GUBBINS ROCHE. Melbourne, 21/1/14.

**Eggs of *Munia pectoralis*.**—It will probably be considered presumptuous on my part to criticise the work of writers like Messrs. A. J. North and A. J. Campbell; but, as the following remarks may help to solve a puzzle, I have no hesitation in making them. It has long been a mystery to me why eggs of *Munia pectoralis* should possess a faint bluish shade, while those of the rest of the genus are pure white. Mr. A. J. North, in pages 281 to 283, vol. ii., of his "Nests and Eggs," describes eggs of *Munia castaneithorax* and *Munia xanthoprymna* as being pure white, while on page 286 those of *Munia pectoralis* are said to be "white, with a faint bluish tinge." Mr. A. J. Campbell describes eggs of *Munia castaneithorax* and *Munia pectoralis* in a similar manner, those of the last-named bird being apparently from the same clutch as described by Mr. North. It struck me as being peculiar that birds so closely allied should lay differently coloured eggs. A set in my own collection presented the same bluish tinge, but the eggs were not identified beyond question, and therefore are labelled "doubtful." From the Macarthur River, Northern Territory, Mr. H. G. Barnard lately sent me a clutch of *Munia pectoralis* eggs, and skins of the parent birds shot at the nest; the eggs are pure white, of similar shape to those of the rest of the genus, and measure — (a) .67 x .47, (b) .65 x .47, (c) .67 x .47, (d) .69 x .49, (e) .71 x .48, (f) .67 x .47. I claim them to form the true type clutch of the species. While on the subject of Mr. North's book, if the publication is to be considered an official one, authorized by the Trustees of the Australian Museum, let us hope that these gentlemen will issue a supplement containing descriptions of the many well-known birds omitted from their proper places in the original. In its present form the work, admirable as it is as far as it goes, is very far from being a complete record of the "Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania."—H. L. WHITE. Belltrees (N.S.W.)

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**Frogmouth and Boobook Owl.**—For several months past I have heard at night a peculiar metallic call. It appeared to come from the creek, about a mile away, and was never heard earlier than 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. A few days ago I was watching a pair of Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) flying about our garden, a little after sunset. Occasionally they uttered the call "Oom, oom," as if communicating something of importance to one another, especially after a sudden swoop on the part of either. A little later a Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*), a frequent visitor, fluttered into one of the pine trees, and began its leisurely, solitary call. Early in the morning I awoke, and, hearing this metallic call, determined, if possible, to find the author thereof. It should be noted that the Boobook Owl continued its note during the time of which I am writing. Going out into the garden, I at first found it very difficult to locate the bird (presumably) for which I was looking. At times the cry appeared

to come from the east, then from the north, and always from far away. Thinking it best to start the search from home, I stood first under one tree, then another, until, coming to an old, partially leafless eucalypt outside the school fence, I distinctly heard, above my head, the sounds, "More pork, more pork," uttered very rapidly from seven to ten times in succession, with a pause of a minute or two before the next series of calls. I could not discern the bird, but it happened to fly down to a low branch, and, being between me and the setting moon, I could see it plainly—in fact, I could have touched it. It was a Frogmouth. For about twenty minutes I stood watching and listening, comparing the two calls as they happened to be uttered together. Then I followed the Frogmouth from tree to tree until it went to a distant paddock, where I could not follow. As a result of my observations, I would say, firstly, that the Frogmouth does call "More pork," and secondly, that no one who has heard the Boobook Owl's and the Frogmouth's calls could ever mistake one for the other. I will indicate what I consider to be the chief points of dissimilarity:—The Boobook Owl has a leisurely call, the Frogmouth a quick call; the Boobook utters one call at a time, the Frogmouth from seven to ten calls in succession; the Owl makes a slight pause between the two syllables "Boo-book," the Frogmouth makes no appreciable pause between the two syllables; the Owl has the distinct vowel sound "oo," whereas *P. strigoides* utters the "aw" in a guttural manner, not nasal. Heard at close range, it sounds like a hoarse whisper; at a little distance it sounds metallic. Constable Montgomery, of Eldorado, was able to confirm my observations. He has seen and heard the Frogmouth many times. —MURIEL CHENEY. Carraragarmungee, 18/1/14.

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**Owlet-Nightjar Nestlings.**—A farm hand at Caermarthen, Manilla, N.S.W., at the end of August last selected an old stump in the ranges for the purpose of steadying his rifle while testing its accuracy in a long shot at a rabbit; but before he could open fire an Owlet-Nightjar (*Egotheles novæ-hollandiæ*) blundered out of the butt. The hollow stump contained four white eggs just within arm's reach from the top of the spout. I visited the spot on 19th September and found the stump situated in a dry gully between two mountains. The adult birds were absent, but the nest contained four nestlings. Two of the brood appeared to be a day or two older than the others, but all were in the down. The following morning I returned, and was rather surprised to find that the two advanced chicks had left the nest, but I was convinced, after witnessing the activity of the others, that they had departed on their own accord. Some patience was required to obtain photographs. The nestlings would persist in scaling the spout, like mice, or fluttering off in opposite directions from the aperture below. After making exposures, I examined the nest. It was

composed of dried leaves and small pieces of shredded bark, matted together in layers with bird droppings. Evidently Owlet-Nightjars do not clean up after their young like most birds that build in the open, but simply cover the nest each night or early



Nesting Place (opened) and Young of Owlet-Nightjar (*Egotheles novæ-hollandiæ*).

FROM A PHOTO. BY H. BURRELL.

in the morning with fresh leaves for the comfort of the brood during the daytime. However, on this occasion the top layer was certainly snug and dry, while directly underneath the excretions were fresh.—HARRY BURRELL. Kensington (N.S.W.), 24/9/13.

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**Leipoa ocellata—Successful Breeding in Captivity.**—It will prove of interest to those who love our native birds to learn that a species so shy and retiring as the Mallee-Fowl has at last been induced to breed in captivity. At Cliff Aviary at the present

time there can be seen a mound built by a pair of these birds. It is about 40 feet in circumference, and built from material placed at their disposal. The aviary is about 45 feet long by 11 feet wide, the width increased to 14 feet at one end to admit of mound-building. The female started laying about the end of last August, and up to date has laid twenty-nine eggs. Having a large rainfall, excessive moisture in the mound destroyed all eggs laid previous to last week in November. About three weeks ago the first chick came out; two more have since appeared, and another is about due now. I have been interested in these wonderful birds for about 30 years, making a special study of them and their habits during the past 12 years. A large number of these birds have passed through my hands during my career as a collector of native fauna. They make very interesting pets, getting on very friendly terms with their keeper. Their dispositions vary considerably, it being easier to get on good terms with some individuals than with others. I always, if possible, take the pairs as I find them, avoiding as much as possible the mating of strange birds. I can always form a good idea of their dispositions during the period spent in the collecting camp; but the best birds to deal with are those reared from chicks. I have several such pairs, and for some years I endeavoured to impress on the minds of these birds the need of taking up family duties and responsibilities. At the age of two years they would hardly entertain the thought; at three years I got them to start in a half-hearted way. Not until the fourth year would they fully accept my suggestion; then, in the month of April, they cleaned out the old hot-bed, and set to work with a will. Then I gave them abundant material, which they made good use of, hence my present success—the first instance on record, I believe, of the breeding of Mallee-Fowl in captivity. —J. P. BELLCHAMBERS. Humbug Scrub (S.A.), 17/2/14.

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### From Magazines, &c.

“**Australian Nature Stories for Children.**” — Under this title an admirable little handbook by Miss Constance Tisdall, B.A., is published by Messrs. James Ingram and Son, Melbourne. It contains twelve charmingly written stories—four each of birds, animals, and trees. But, although only “stories,” it is a pity that all the natural history facts are not accurate. Surely Miss Tisdall could have got some expert friend to *visé* her proofs. The Laughing Jackass, or Great Kingfisher, is stated to lay “two lovely eggs.” That bird oftener lays three eggs, while the full complement is four. “Some Magpies lay eight eggs” is another statement. Any schoolboy will tell you that Magpies lay three or four eggs, rarely five! But the most astounding statement of all is that the Lyre-Bird lays a “pale green egg”! Exception is also taken to attributing the wonder-workings of Nature to