

Stray Feathers.

Rare Birds.—One Painted Snipe was seen on the Purrumbete estate, Camperdown, early in November, and a pair on Marida Yallock estate, near Terang; also a Little Bittern (very rare here) at Forest Park, Naroghid, the first noticed for over twenty years.

L. BUCKLAND. Camperdown, Vic., 25/II/18.

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Bustard and Mice.—During the mouse plague here I shot a large Australian Bustard or Plain-Turkey (*Choriotis australis*). When cleaning it I found it had two complete Quail in perfect condition, and the hair from innumerable mice which it must have devoured. The Quail were in immense numbers about the same time as the mouse plague. On one occasion I flushed a bird from its nest, which contained eleven eggs.—ARTHUR C. BLIGH. Condamine Plains, Brookstead (Q.), 11/II/18.

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Lyre-Bird's Nest.—The Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriae*), fortunately, has not yet been killed out by foxes, for I had the pleasure of listening to four male birds lately at Porepunkah; also, a few days ago I saw a nest on the side of the cutting near Eurobin Falls. The coach to Mount Buffalo passes within a few feet of the nest, and yet the sitting bird was not disturbed. This shows that this bird is not as shy at times as it is made out to be. It is one of the earliest nesting birds we have, and begins to sit about the middle of July.—THOMAS BELL. Porepunkah (Vic.)

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A Dance of Coots.—Mr. L. W. Thruston, of Devonport, tells me that when at Campbelltown, in the Tasmanian midlands, he surprised, among the tall tussocks at the edge of a swamp, a party of Bald-Coots (*Porphyrio melanonotus*), which were apparently occupied with some kind of social gathering or dance. Four of them were standing together, with the wings half-elevated, and one of these had its foot partly raised as if about to strike it on the ground. About half a dozen others were standing round looking on. He had a few seconds to observe them before they saw him, when the party immediately dissolved. The incident was forcibly recalled to his mind recently when looking through Hudson's "Naturalist in La Plata" by the illustration in that volume of the dance of Jacanas.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S. West Devonport, Tas.

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An Extraordinary Accident.—A mishap of a most unusual and curious character befel Mr. Howard Dimmock, of Glendonbrook, on Thursday evening, 24th October. He was coming into town (says the *Singleton Argus*) in his motor-car early in the evening.

and when near the Glendon bridge some object struck his wind screen, smashing the thick glass to fragments. Pieces of the glass wounded Mr. Dimmock in three places on the face, narrowly missing his eyes, but fortunately he stuck to his steering wheel. On arrival in town he was streaming with blood, and his three wounds had to be stitched, while a piece of glass was extracted from his face. On examining the car the dead body of a Jackass was found in the vehicle. Its head and back were broken, showing that it had had a head-on collision. The car was travelling at a fair speed at the time, and Mr. Dimmock was very lucky in not being much more seriously injured by the flying glass. It was "bad for a coo" when she met a railway train, and the Kooka-burra found it equally bad to get in the way of a motor-car.

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The Gull as a Storm Prophet.—On a beautifully sunny afternoon in mid-May last, a friend and myself noticed a number of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) going through strange antics in the air over the River Mersey, wheeling in circles at a good height, then diving suddenly towards the water, recovering before touching the surface, and ascending to repeat the performance. Two days afterwards a spell of rough weather set in, with north-west squalls and rain. Again, on the afternoon of 25th September, which was equally fine, with fresh north-west breeze, the Silver Gulls were seen at the same aerial gambols, which were followed within 48 hours by a strong disturbance, with thunder, north-west squalls, and heavy showers. There is no doubt that the birds felt these atmospheric disturbances approaching long before they were perceptible to us, and were impelled to unusual action thereby, in the same way that the domestic cat will sometimes go "fey" twenty-four hours or even more before a cyclonic disturbance, and tear about the rooms and in and out of the house like a mad thing.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S. West Devonport, Tasmania, 31/10/18.

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Pajingo Notes.—I once saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle swoop down and grab a very big tom-cat, gone wild. The Eagle carried the cat up about 30 feet, then let it drop—whether to kill it that way or because it could not hold it longer I cannot say. The Eagle at once swooped down again, but the cat cleverly evaded its talons, and before he could rise and make his third swoop effective the cat reached safety in some bushes, and the Eagle, with a defiant flight round our heads, flew away. With Eagles and Crows my theory is they do an immense deal of good in their natural state, but when they become rogues, and find lambs are good, these particular Eagles become a pest, and those Crows that come about homesteads and steal the fowls' food, and chickens when available, give up searching for their natural food,

and sooner or later have to be destroyed. The same applies to that charming and interesting mimic and all-round clever clown, the Queensland Bower-Bird (*Chlamydera orientalis*), which is often seen here. I like to hear them making all sorts of queer noises and see them doing a fighting strut with their crest up, but occasionally one of them becomes destructive, not allowing a tomato, peach, or other fruit to ripen—just pulls off the lot, and throws them down; but this does not often happen. I have had a few sad days when a noted bad character has disappeared during my absence, and also noted the contented and too-innocent face of the gardener.

Our summer birds are back again. We look every October for the Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) and Dollar-Birds (*Eurystomus australis*), and it is a marvel ever new how the little Native-Hen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) appears early in November, with the very first thunderstorm. (Where do they winter?) One night last week a flight of these birds flew over our house, and one hit the roof and scrambled about for a time. Next morning a little Hen was fluttering about the lawn and garden, eating bits of pig-weed, and quite at home. The next morning it was gone, and one wonders if it knew where to follow on and find its late companions.

We are having a bad time—no rain of use since last March—and the water-holes are giving out fast. The Cormorants are having a great time among the dying fish. I notice that stockmen always call them "foul birds that pollute water-holes," but forget the dead fish would also do that if the Shags did not help to get rid of them. Bush fires have been dreadful this year also. —J. BLACK (MRS. A. BLACK). Pajingo Station, via Charters Towers, Queensland.

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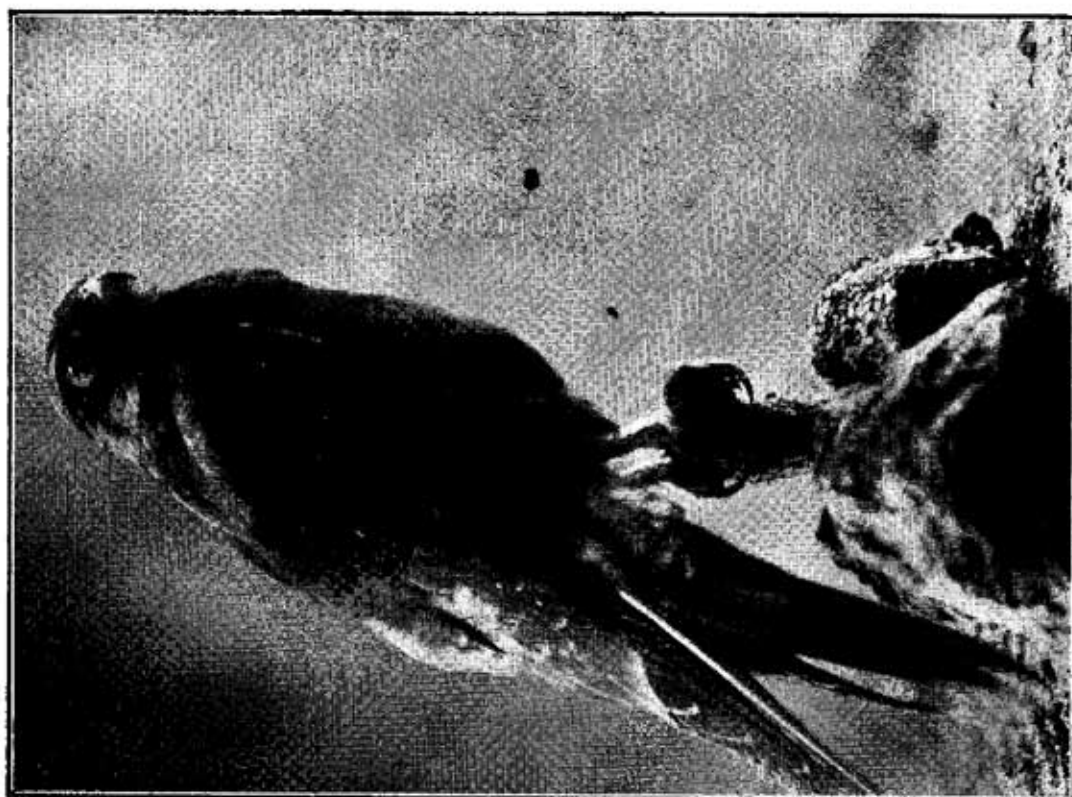
Some Gilgi Notes.—We have had the Painted Quail (*Turnix varia*) on the plains in these parts in millions, but the cold, combined with the extremely dry weather, has cleared most of them away. I witnessed a tragedy lately, while catching a horse in the yards. A Painted Quail whizzed past me, and, making straight for the house, went bang against the wall. I have seen them strike wire and rail fences, but one would naturally expect them to steer clear of a house. We have had no rain for six months, and the Condamine River is dry, and the bird masons are hard put to it to provide nesting homes for the season, such as the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*), Grey Jumper (*Struthidea cinerea*), Tree-Martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*), and the Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*); so I allowed my windmill tank to overflow to provide the necessary moisture for the mud, and also provide water for the Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), Laughing Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigas*), &c. The above birds never seem to leave us. Our Swallows disappeared for six weeks, but returned two weeks ago, and are now patching up their old nest, which they always seem

to do in preference to building a new one. Yesterday I noticed a pair of Grey Jumpers busy building, but the Magpie-Larks have not started yet; these birds are usually the first to begin nesting, and I have never seen them with young at the end of May, but in June and July they all appear to have their young ones. The dry season may account for the delay this year. A pair built their nest last year a few feet under the nest of a Crow, and apparently were not disturbed by this bird; possibly the Crows were a protection from other birds, but I do not know why the young birds were not eaten by the Crows, as I saw one pick a Magpie-Lark off a post one day and go off with it; however, this is unusual, and I think the bird must have been driven by hunger. Also, one killed a pet Scaly-breasted Lorikeet (*Psitteuteles chlorolepidotus*) one day last week. The little bird fell out of its nesting hollow in a tree in the garden. I was rearing him until he could fly. He was fed two or three times a day by his parents, and we gave him extra rations in the shape of a spoonful of honey. He was getting on very well, and was placed on the branch of a tree every morning, and I noticed that when fed by the parents he sat up and vigorously flapped his wings. The parents probably had to go to some scrub country about ten miles away for their food, as no trees are flowering here. They first fed their young at from 8.30 to 9 a.m., then again at mid-day, and lastly towards evening—never more than three times daily.

During the mating season I have noticed that the males of the Australian Bustard or Plain-Turkey (*Eupodotis australis*) disport themselves exactly as the tame species do by fanning their tails, outstretching their wings, and lowering the skin of their breasts almost to the ground. I noticed a pair fighting lately, and after a vicious bout they would circle round one another with their plumes extended, making a peculiar noise at the same time.

I found a Freckled Frogmouth (*Podargus phalaenoides*) nesting lately. I think these birds account for many of the young birds in the nests about here, but of that I am not certain. The Magpies suffer very much, and I have known those that live about the house to build two or three nests in the season without result; another time they might rear two clutches. Last year three of our pet Magpies had two nests, and the male bird had charge of both nests; anyway, he fed the young of both, almost 100 yards apart. The birds have had a royal time for months with the mice, and will miss them when they disappear; they are not so plentiful now, and seem to be on the move. A strange and fortunate circumstance connected with this plague is the absence of any young.

I am feeding some cattle from a couple of haystacks, and, of course, Magpies are plentiful, with a pair of Crows (*Corvus coronoides*) and a Whistling-Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*) hard by. It is amusing to watch the antics of the birds. Evidently the Magpies do the hunting, but as soon as a Crow sees that his



The Brown Hawk.

PHOTO. BY W. H. D. LE SOUEF, C.M.Z.S.



Spine-bill Honey-eater.

PHOTO. BY A. JONES, KANGAROO GROUNDS.

friend has a mouse he sets off after the Magpie, and before many minutes have elapsed the mouse drops to the ground, to be immediately taken up by the Crow. In turn the Eagle, being near all the time, sets off after the Crow, and in a very short time he drops his prey, which is cleverly caught in mid-air by the Eagle, who then retires to a convenient post to enjoy his mouse. I notice also that if the Magpie comes in my direction his pursuers do not follow him. I observe scores of these birds out on the plains right into the middle of the nesting season which have apparently no parental cares. I see them coming to their haunts in the early morning and returning in the dusk; but then the drought which we are passing through might account for that. We are having one of the coldest and driest winters on record, and milk was frozen solid in the house on Thursday night. It is nothing to get three weeks on end of frost.—E. R. CALDWELL. Gilgi, Pampas, Queensland, 20/9/18.

Camera Craft Notes.

The Brown Hawk.—The following important note from Mr. Tom Carter was too late to be included with the article published in the last number of *The Emu* on "Food of the Diurnal Birds of Prey." He states that on 21st January, 1916, he shot a Brown Hawk (*Hieracidea occidentalis*) in South-West Australia, which he suspected of evil intentions, as it was perched in a tree above a lot of feeding poultry. On examining the bird he found that its crop was packed full of large caterpillars and grubs. This shows that this particular Hawk is evidently of far more value to the farming community than it is generally given credit for. It is probably one of our commonest Hawks.—W. H. D. LE SOUËF.

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The Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*).—One of the most beautiful-liveried of our southern Honey-eaters, the Spinebill has been aptly named on account of its spine-like beak, which is eminently adapted to sip the deep-seated nectar situate in long, cylindrical, bell-like flowers and pendulous blossoms, because of its long, slender, and somewhat recurvent structure. It is indeed a fascinating sight to observe a pair of Spinebills fluttering and hovering in front of a bunch of wild-flowers which are to be found growing on a shrub. It is truly marvellous how the bird can drink in the honeyed contents with the aid of its brush-like tongue whilst suspended in mid-air in this manner, uttering meanwhile its shrill but musical note. It is thus able, whilst on flight, to obtain the delectable contents of those flowers that are otherwise inaccessible to it, especially those that would break off owing to their fragility if alighted on by the bird when searching for food. These dainty birds exhibit little fear, as a rule, when