

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.

* * *

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

approached, and one can readily observe their handsome plumage whilst they are ravishing the flowers for their sweet contents, and at the same time fertilizing them by unconsciously carrying the pollen from one flower to the other. The Spinebill is readily distinguished from other Honey-eaters by its white, brown, and black appearance, its ruby-coloured eye, and its distinctive long, slender bill. This dapper bird acts as a foster-parent to the large Pallid Cuckoo, and it is quite an interesting sight to watch the foster-parent feeding the young Cuckoo, which is much larger than the nest when it is old enough to fly. The nourishing of the Cuckoo is accomplished by the Spinebill by perching on the back of its foster-child, which opens its mouth, doubles back its head, and receives the proffered morsel, consisting of various insects.—A. MATTINGLEY.

Correspondence.

To the Editors of the "The Emu,"

DEAR SIRs,—Will you allow me to reply to Mr. W. T. Foster's remarks *re* "Cormorants: Are They Pests or Otherwise?" which appeared in the last issue of *The Emu*, and in which he criticises my research work. Firstly, I would point out that any research work must be carried out in a scientific manner, otherwise it is of little use. All dates, localities, and so on must be verified, otherwise no reliance can be put upon statements or suppositions. Secondly, Mr. Foster says I examined seventeen specimens, all from the one locality. If he follows up my work he will see I have examined over 60 stomachs, covering the greater part of the year, and from many localities. Your contributor then proceeds to show that I must be wrong, because he saw a fish in a Cormorant's throat 46 years ago, when quite a lad; this is only one bird, and he did not examine the stomach. It is hardly a scientific argument to rely upon one's memory when a boy in 1862. I would further state that a great deal of research work carried out on most scientific lines by my esteemed friend Dr. A. M. Morgan bears me out on all points raised. Many of the specimens taken and dissected by me were taken close to well-known fishing grounds—in fact, in some instances fishermen were catching whiting at the time, yet not one was found in the stomachs of the birds. As for seeing Cormorants swallowing fish, this cannot be taken as evidence, for Mr. Foster did not examine any of their stomach contents, and, as to the species of the fish, it is a mere supposition. I am surprised that your contributor's long years of experience have not shown him that the Cormorant can more easily catch the slow-swimming fish, and thus nature's balance is preserved. It is destructive man who upsets the balance, and blames the unfortunate birds for it. In the opening lines of Mr. Foster's article he says "and perhaps throw some