

for its large and conspicuous nest. I have found it among ferns and undergrowth on the margins of mountain creeks, on logs and low rocks in open forest country, destitute of any cover; on the top of wild vines; at the foot of large tree-ferns, and in the crown of tall ones; while in one instance the nest was discovered in the fork of a tree over 18 feet above ground.

The female exhibits no shyness when there is a chick in the nest. While examining a young bird I have seen the female scratching about contentedly not four yards away. Indeed, when the young bird, on being handled, uttered its piercing call, the watchful parent, moved by that "mother-love which is stronger than the fear of death," came fussing distressedly around my feet. The male, however, kept at a safe distance, merely exhibiting himself occasionally on a low tree-branch or log, with his fine tail spread. In one instance I found a grub, probably the larva of a sarcophaga, or carnivorous fly, attached to the beak of a young Lyre-Bird, near the root. This parasite, however, disappeared before the chick left the nest.

As the Lyre-Bird is most at home about gullies in dense scrubs and remote mountain ranges, it should be in no danger of extinction. Its chief enemies are the "tail hunter" and the fox. The latter, I think, often disposes of the Lyre-Bird chick while in the nest.

The Kookaburra.

By J. T. RYAN, PARKVILLE (VIC.)

(Communicated by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S.)

DURING the last few months I have seen several articles appearing in the *Argus* condemning this bird as an outlaw. Mr. Tom Fisher, of Ercildoune, says he creates a lot of havoc by eating our small insectivorous birds and robbing their nests. Well, I have spent most of my life in the bush—that is, about 30 years—and I have never seen the Kookaburra kill a small bird or interfere with their nests. I have always been a keen observer of nature and studied the habits of most of our native birds, and always looked upon the Kookaburra as one of the best birds we have in Australia. I have seen him killing snakes up to 3 feet long on several occasions. His method of doing so was to pounce on the snake and secure a good hold of it just behind the head, about 2 inches back from its fangs; then it would get up on the branch of a tree and beat the life out of it on one of the limbs, but never for a moment relaxing its hold on the snake. Sometimes another Kookaburra would get hold of the snake's tail and also drive his strong bill into the body of the snake—in fact, I have seen as many as four Kookaburras at the one snake, but the one that had the snake by the head never let go his hold until the snake was dead. Sometimes the snake would coil around the neck

of the Kookaburra, but with the aid of its wings it would nearly always prevent the snake from getting a coil around its neck and free itself quickly. On one occasion I noticed a pair of Kookaburras had a nest of young ones in the hollow of a dry tree: underneath the tree, in a small shrub growing on the bank of the stream, was a nest of the Black-and-White Fantail, with the female bird sitting on the eggs. After a time the young ones hatched, and I have watched the birds feed their young until they left the nest. Now, if the Kookaburra is such a demon as they class her on our small birds, why did she not take the young of the Fantail which was under her eyes constantly, not 20 feet away from where she had to procure food for her own young? I noticed also that small birds of several varieties were numerous around this locality, and they all seemed to rear their young and were never molested by the Kookaburra. I noticed that the Kookaburra feeds its young on grubs of all sorts, small snakes, mice, lizards, worms, and various other insects, but never on any occasion have I seen them bring a small bird to feed their young on.

From my personal observation of the Kookaburra and what I have seen of this bird I look upon it as most valuable as a snake-destroyer. For years I have had constant opportunities of studying its habits, so until I see him doing the mischief to small birds that he is supposed to do I will always look upon "Jacko" as one of my friends. I had an interview with Mr. D. Le Souëf on the subject of the Kookaburra destroying small birds. He is mostly of the same opinion as myself. I consider the Boobook Owl and the Butcher-Bird or, as it is familiarly called, the "Derwent Jackass"—account for a good many small birds, and probably young, as well as the rats and mice they kill. I hope your Society will give the Kookaburra their best protection, and would be very sorry to see him classed as an outlaw.

An Unidentified *Petroica* (Australian Robin).

By H. V. EDWARDS, BEGA, N.S.W.

A CONSIDERABLE time ago—about the eighties—I became acquainted, at Mittagong, N.S.W., some 70 miles south of Sydney, with a Robin which had the peculiar habit of nesting on piles of horse or cattle manure, or on clods of earth, and occasionally in the banks of creeks—never, to my knowledge, in a tree.

My interest in this bird was renewed by the publication, two or three years ago, in the *Sydney Mail*, of a nature story paragraph in which the peculiar nesting habit of this Robin was referred to. It was described as "one of the *Petroica* species," but neither specific name nor habitat was assigned it by the writer. The sexes are alike, and closely resemble the female of the Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica leggei*), but neither male nor female