

Meliphaga sonora. Singing Honey-eater.—Among the plantations where there are a fair number of the blue gums and different varieties of Wattle, this bird is sometimes seen. It is never plentiful away from this one favoured place.

Meliphaga penicillata. White-plumed Honey-eater.—Plentiful all through the year in any of the plantations, more especially those containing blue gums. These birds seem to nest over a long period. On last Christmas day I noticed one of their frail nests containing three eggs hanging from a fine limb close to the ground. This nest was quite close to the house, and I am afraid before the young birds were ready to fly they made a meal for one of the cats.

Anthus australis. Australian Pipit.—Anywhere on the Plains this little bird can be seen in numbers. During last year's drought many of these birds came right into the station yard, probably securing food amongst the horse yards and hay stacks.

Mirafra javanica. Horsfield's Bush Lark.—Whether this is a bush lark or not, it certainly inhabits the plains in considerable numbers, especially where there is any cultivation. I have never noticed the nest of this bird, but I am certain they breed on the plains, probable amongst the crops.

Corvus coronoides. Australian Crow.—Plentiful all through the year, and at certain times there are flocks of many hundreds to be seen. These birds seem to be among the earliest to breed, and I have noticed eggs as early as July, but the majority breed in August and September.

Strepera versicolor. Grey Bell Magpie.—Last year during September a pair of these birds were here for a few weeks; only on odd occasions have I noticed them here, and they remain only a very short time.

Gymnorhina leuconota. White-backed Magpie.—This is one of the most plentiful birds in the district, but I am afraid it is being thinned out to a great extent by farmers poisoning them on newly sown ground. We always have a few pairs around the garden, and many hundreds return each night to roost in the old trees about the homestead. Some of the old birds are very savage at nesting time, and on more than one occasion I have known them to pick right through a thick felt hat.

Camera Craft

Tree-creeper and Silver-eye.—While at Greensborough in October last with Mr. L. G. Chandler, we discovered the nest of a pair of White-throated Tree-creeper (*Climacteris leucophaea*) in a hollow tree-trunk about six feet from the ground. About three years before, we had found a nest in the same hollow, but had been unable to obtain pictures. On this occasion the birds appeared fairly trustful, but the tree was in the shade, and the position little suited to photography. The camera was focussed on the entrance of the nest, and a considerable length of thread used to release the shutter. The bird invariably approached the nest in the same manner, and the pictures show little variation. Flying to the base of the tree on the side hidden from the camera, she proceeded as close to the nest entrance as was possible without coming into view. Then head and shoulders would appear. If dissatisfied with the appearance of the camera, she backed out of sight again. I was



White-throated Tree-creeper (*Climacteris leucophaea*).

Photo. by R. T. Littlejohns, R.A.O.U.



The Silver-eye (*Zosterops lateralis*).

Photo. by R. T. Littlejohns, R.A.O.U.



Nest of White-throated Tree-creeper in an old kettle. Note the cover of sheet iron kept in place by a stone.

Photo. by A. H. Chisholm, R.A.O.U.



Nest of White-throated Tree-creeper *in situ*; a piece of the outer covering has been removed.

Photo. by D. W. Gaukrodgers, R.A.O.U.

struck with this backing movement. Whenever the Tree-creeper wished, for any reason, to proceed down a limb or tree-trunk, it steadfastly refused to turn about and move head downward. It hopped backward instead, and appeared equally as agile as when hopping upward.

The Silver-eye (*Zosterops dorsalis*) I have not found at any time a satisfactory subject for photography, and three or four attempts had left me with the impression that the greedy little bird showed rather a heartless unconcern for eggs or young. But a pair found nesting at Oakleigh in November last were more trustful than the average. Even these birds were pictured only after a three-hour wait. A thirty-foot thread was stretched from the shutter release through a furze hedge near by. Behind this hedge I sat. In a quarter of an hour one bird had approached quite close to the nest, but perched in such a position as to be hidden by the nest from the stare of the lens. Every few minutes she elevated her head ever so slowly, regarded the camera most comically over the top of the nest, then disappeared again just as slowly. This went on for three-quarters of an hour, after which I left the spot for quite thirty minutes. I crept back fully expecting the bird to have become accustomed to the apparatus. Considerably to my amusement and much to my disgust, I found the hide-and-seek business still going on. Later in the day, however, several plates were exposed.—R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, R.A.O.U., Melbourne, August 25th, 1921.

* * *

Nesting of Tree-creepers.—This has been an extraordinary year for nesting birds, both in the South and North of Eastern Australia. It is not unusual to find birds breeding in Queensland during the autumn or winter months, as many species have been doing this year, but it is an event out of the common to find, as some of us did a few months ago, such birds as Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and Yellow-tailed Tits tending babes in Victoria during April and May. Now comes word from the same State that Brown Tree-creepers have made an unusually early start with their *menage*.

July had not gone when a particular pair of these birds brought fresh material to an old kettle, stuck upon a post, in which they have been wont to nest for many years. On August 5th, there were two eggs in the novel nest, and two more were expected. Last year two broods were reared in that situation; with the early start this year, it is suggested by the "official" owners of the kettle that four broods may be produced during the current spring.

It is not the early breeding that interests, however, so much as the remarkable tenacity of the Tree-creepers for the particular nesting-site. As the photograph indicates, the kettle was merely hung carelessly on a fence-post. The site was not twenty yards from a house, a bush home in an orchard. Yet in this precarious situation the Tree-creepers have nested during eight consecutive years! That it is the same pair of birds

that have occupied the kettle all along, the owners of the orchard are convinced, partly by reason of the fact that other birds are driven away when they approach the nest. Further, it is believed that the two original Tree-creepers "camp" in the kettle during the winter. Certainly they appear to be always about the neighbourhood.

By reason of the fact that Tree-creepers usually select a hollow post or limb of a tree for breeding purposes, the nesting-site is seldom adaptable to photography. A rough idea of situation in the instance under notice, however, can be gained from the illustration of the kettle site—made more cosy with a brick and bit of tin on top. But a better indication is offered by Mr. D. W. Gaukrodger's picture of a nest (same species), in a dried boree tree in Central Queensland. In this case the eggs were exposed through the removal of a narrow strip of bark for photographic purposes.—A. H. CHISHOLM, Brisbane. 25/8/21.

* * *

Nesting of Emu.—This pair of Emus are nesting this season in a small enclosure by the home of my sister, Mrs. Wyatt de Little, Temora, N.S.W. They are a very quiet pair. The hen started to nest early in the season, and laid two or more eggs after she became broody. The eggs took about fifty-two days to incubate; the male bird took very little notice of the young ones. This pair hatched all the seven eggs laid, but one young one died before the hen left the nest; the others are doing well.

The male bird is easily distinguished from his mate; he has a fuller breast, which he can inflate while making the drumming noise. The hen bird has a totally different note, more like a soft grunt, which she uses to call, and also to warn her young ones in case of danger.—SHEILA M. ROBERTSON, R.A.O.U., Mordialloc.

* * *

Good Camera Subjects.—The accompanying photograph of a pair of Yellow Robins (*Eopsaltria australis*) was one of a series taken by us last season on the Scotchman's Creek, Oakleigh (Vic.). This pair of birds was remarkably tame. The male repeatedly fed the female on the nest while we had the cameras focussed at a distance of eighteen inches only.

At another time, when the young had hatched out, we placed a piece of brown paper over the nest to shield them from the hot sun. The female, on arriving at the nest, and finding she could not reach the nestlings, proceeded to brood them through the paper. It was an amusing sight to see the bird anxiously trying to fathom the altered conditions.

We succeeded in securing some pictures also, showing the bird sitting on her nest, with one of us touching her breast with the hand. She took little notice of this liberty beyond occasionally pecking at the offending finger.—S. A. LAWRENCE, R.A.O.U., and R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.



Nesting Emus. Note the two young birds by the head of the sitting bird.

Photo. by Miss Sheila M. Robertson, R.A.O.U.



Male Yellow-breasted Robin feeding his mate on the well-camouflaged nest.

Photo. by S. A. Lawrence and R. T. Littlejohns, Ms. R.A.O.U.