

Description of Eggs* of the Golden-shouldered Parrot (*Psephotus chrysopterygius*)

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A considerable amount of mystery was attached to this beautiful little Parrot, it being confused with the Hooded Parrot *Psephotus dissimilis*, until W. McLennan set all doubts at rest by securing a pair on the Archer River, and sending to G. M. Mathews, who confirmed Gould's identification, made in 1857.

McLennan's observations lead to the conclusion that the habitat of *Psephotus chrysopterygius* is practically confined to a portion of the Cape York Peninsula, and the country adjacent to the south-eastern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The finding of the Parrot's breeding places, holes drilled into Termites' mounds, led to the equally interesting discovery of a new moth, the caterpillar of which lives in the nests, feeds upon the excreta of the nestlings, and pupates in the termitarium. The moth submitted to Dr. A. Jefferis Turner, of Brisbane, is found to be a new genus which he names *Neossiosynoeca scatophaga*, and will describe later in an English scientific paper. The habits of the insects are so extraordinary that Dr. Turner wishes attention drawn to them throughout the world.

Mr. McLennan first received a definite report upon the existence of *P. chrysopterygius* in the Coen district, when a friend stated he had seen it in the vicinity of Port Stewart, and had noted old nests in anthills. Nothing further was done in the matter until 22nd April, 1922, when a station hand reported having found a bird supposed to be the Golden-shouldered Parrot breeding some 14 miles north of Coen. Mr. McLennan proceeded to the spot, which is a large flat, thickly dotted with magnetic and spire-shaped termitariums. The nesting site was soon located by the half-caste guide; the female bird flushed when the party was a few yards from the nesting hole, which contained six very heavily incubated eggs. The termitarium was spire-shaped, height six feet, with a top diameter of 6 inches. Entrance to the nest 2 ft. 6 in. from ground, circular in shape, 1½ in. x 1½ in. Egg chamber 7 in. diameter by 6 in. deep.

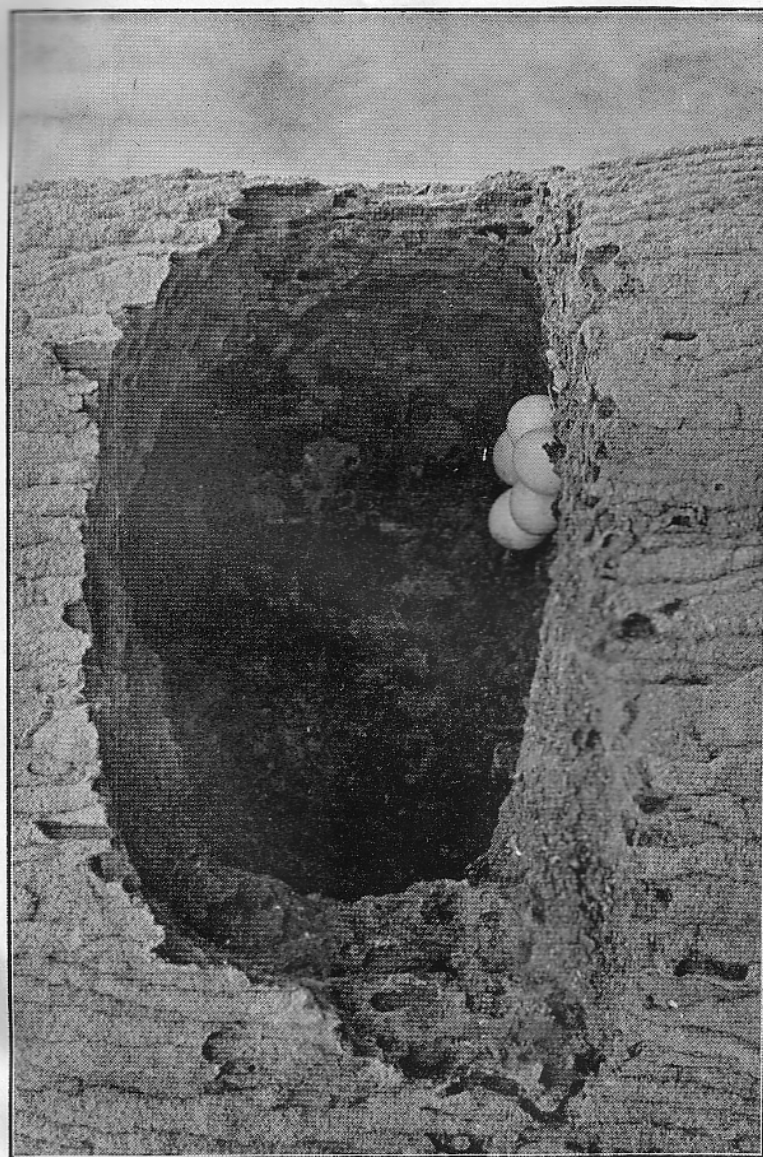
Another nesting hole was found (1/5/22) in a magnetic termitarium; had been taken possession of by a pair of Finches (*Poephila atropygialis*), and their nest partly built; but under it were found 4 eggs of the Parrot. In this case the nesting hole was 3 ft. from the ground; 1½ in. diameter; depth from entrance to rear 1 ft. 11 in.; egg chamber 12½ in. x 4 in.; eggs

* Eggs supposed to be those of this bird were described in *The Emu*, vol. ii., p. 94, but a mistake was clearly made as the Golden-shouldered Parrot is not found west of the Gulf of Carpentaria.



Entrance to Nest of Golden-shouldered Parrot (*Psephotus chrysopterygius*) in
Spire-shaped Anthill.

Photo. by W. McLennan, R.A.O.U.



Nest and Eggs of Golden-shouldered Parrot (*Psepholus chrysopterygius*).

Photo. by W. McLennan, R.A.O.U.



Feeding young Golden-shouldered Parrots (*Psephotus chrysopleurygius*) by W. McLennan. Onlooker Master Henry M. Hordern, youngest member of the R.A.O.U.

Photo. by H. L. White, R.A.O.U.

placed in middle of chamber. Termitarium 5 ft. 6 in. high, 5 ft. in length, 18 in. thick at base, tapering to a fine edge at top; thickness at nest 7 in.

The nesting sites appear to be rather frequently taken possession of by *P. atropygialis*. Eggs of the Parrot are laid on soft broken up termitarium material, and number from 4 to 6, pure white, almost round, and with little gloss.

Clutch 1, measuring in millimetres:—

A—.83 x .70 B—.83 x .70 C—.81 x .72

Clutch 2 (Type).—A—.83 x .73; B—.84 x .74; C—.84 x .68; D—.82 x .73.

One clutch taken was the produce of birds in immature plumage, which presented such variation from adults that Mr. McLennan at first thought he had a new species. The variation probably accounts for stories circulated as to two species of anthill Parrots being found in the Coen district, but a person of Mr. McLennan's wide experience and ornithological knowledge is not likely to have overlooked a second species during nine months' residence in the locality.
