

## Avifauna of the Cattai-Colo

By A. J. MARSHALL, R.A.O.U., Penshurst, N.S.W.

Bisected by the clear, swift-running Cattai Creek, the famous Hawkesbury River and the picturesque Colo River, this district is a naturalists' paradise. Birds representing almost every Australian order are to be observed there; at least two genera of the small insect-eating bats are plentiful, a monotreme (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is not infrequently seen, whilst several species of 'possums, wallabies, and indigenous rats are also on the list.

During September, 1931, I accompanied Mr. L. Cameron, R.A.O.U., and his nephew, Master Andrew Thomas, on a week's camping trip in this prolific locality, and the few brief notes provided hereunder represent observations made on birds not recorded by Mr. J. Roy Kinghorn, C.M.Z.S. (*The Emu*, Vol. XXIV, 1924, pp. 134-141) or by Mr. K. A. Hindwood, R.A.O.U. (*The Emu*, Vol. XXXI, 1931, pp. 37-40) and help to complete the bird census of the locality.

*Turnix varia*. Painted Quail.—Several pairs were observed in the open timber, and three birds would come to the camp regularly to pick up crumbs each time we vacated it. They were extremely elusive.

*Microcarbo melanoleucus*. Little Pied Cormorant.—Plentiful on the river and in the small adjacent swamps. The swamps are filled periodically by the river when it overflows its banks; not at all an uncommon occurrence in this district. As dusk falls, Black Ducks quietly descend upon the swamps to feed, whilst the air overhead is filled by tiny fluttering bats, which chiefly subsist on night-flying aquatic insects.

*Haliaeetus leucogaster*. Sea-Eagle.—A couple of pairs always in the vicinity. Each morning we used to see the Sea-Eagle, in company with a pair of Whistling Eagles, feeding on the entrails of rabbits which we had carried away from the Camp the previous evening. Proceeding upstream on our way home, we observed a large Sea-Eagle rise from the opposite bank with a goanna about 20 inches long in its talons. The goanna struggled desperately, and the Eagle was furiously attacked by several Ravens, Currawongs and Magpie Larks, all of which apparently failed to realise that the Sea-Eagle was destroying their worst enemy. The Eagle seemed to experience some difficulty in rising with its squirming captive, so it flew slowly downstream some 30 feet above the water, still pursued by the smaller species.

*Chalcites basalis*. Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo.—Though not so plentiful as the Golden Bronze Cuckoo, the Narrow-billed Bronze was seen fairly frequently. Every morning one would perch on a large dead tree near our Camp, and give its repeated downward plaintive note.

*Chthonicola sagittata*. Speckled Warbler.—A pair was noted feeding amongst broken rocky country near the river, and in company with Buff-tailed Thornbills, but the species was extremely rare, and no nests were located.

*Acanthiza lineata*. Striated Thornbill.—One or two were observed near Cattai Creek, but they are not at all common, like their congeners, the Yellow-tailed, Buff-tailed, and Little Thornbills.

*Pardulotus ornatus*. Red-tipped Pardalote.—Common on the Hawkesbury, where they not infrequently confiscate the nests of Fairy Martins, built under cliffs overhanging the river. Two of the six "Red-tips" nests located were built in "Bottle Swallows" nests, one of which was quite new, and was situated amid a colony of about 30 others. No difficulty was experienced in securing pictures of both sexes at the entrance of a tunnel in a bank, the birds entering one tunnel containing young whilst I was focussing my camera!

*Melithreptus lunatus*. White-naped Honeyeater.—A tame and confiding species, which is common in the tall timber of the open forest, where I noticed them feeding on insects and leaf-scale.

*M. gularis*. Black-chinned Honeyeater.—The beautiful notes of the "Black-throat" were fairly often heard, but the bird itself was rarely seen, owing to its shy nature. They are easily distinguished from the preceding species by virtue of the blue spot near the eye and straight bar over the nape, instead of the red or orange spot near the eye and the shaped crescent over the nape in the preceding bird.

*Gliciphila indistincta*. Brown Honeyeater.—One pair only seen.

*Zanthomiza phrygia*. Regent Honeyeater.—Only a single example of this Honeyeater observed in the yellow-box country.

*Meliphaga fusca*. Fuscous Honeyeater.—Common in the box forest. Leaf-scale and flying insects appear to form the bulk of their food supply. One pair of birds was noted feeding young.

*Steganopleura bichenovii*. Double-bar Finch.—A couple observed among some low stunted bushes. I have on only a few occasions seen them at all close to Sydney, the nearest being at Doonside, some 25 miles due west.

The total number of birds listed for the district is, therefore, now 130.

## A Problem in Nest Destruction

By A. J. MARSHALL, R.A.O.U., Penshurst, N.S.W.

For many years past ornithologists working the "scrub" or "jungle" country south of Sydney have been perplexed by the repeated destruction of nests and the disappearance of their contents, either eggs or young. Indeed few of the scrub-dwelling species appear to be entirely exempt from the attentions of the supposed marauder for I have records of nests of the following species being robbed or destroyed: Golden Whistlers, Rufous and Grey Fantails, Black-faced Flycatchers, Yellow-throated and White-browed Scrub-Wren, Brown Warblers, and even as large a species as the Green Catbird.

Some birds, particularly the Yellow-throated Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis lathamii*) and the elfin Brown Warbler (*Gerygone richmondi*) appear to be less fortunate than their immediate neighbours, for the nests of those delightful little scrub-dwellers are destroyed with monotonous regularity. In most instances a hole about an inch in length is torn in the side of the lichen-clad, pensile home of *Gerygone* and