

## Stray Feathers and Camera Craft

**Brush Turkeys and Their Young.**—Mr. L. G. Chandler's notes on the Mallee-Fowl in *The Emu* for April, 1933, p. 303, suggest the placing on record here of observations made by me some years ago on the Brush-Turkey (*Alectura lathami*). The particular point which interests me in Mr. Chandler's article is his conjecture that the scratching of the old birds on the mound about hatching time is done to assist the young ones to liberty. I formed the same conclusion after watching, on many occasions and at several nests, the behaviour of the Brush-Turkey. I never had the good fortune actually to witness (as Mr. Chandler did) the emergence of a young one from the nest, although on one or two occasions I saw newly-hatched young ones close to nest-mounds which were being tended at the time by parent birds.

One morning I was witness to a procedure which excited hopes that the manner of the young Turkeys' debut was about to be revealed to me. On this occasion I was in hiding close to a nest when both parents appeared and began scratching holes about the top circumference of the mound. The male, which on previous occasions I had seen doing the same thing alone, now seemed excited by the presence of his mate, and interfered considerably with her work. Both desisted for a time, and the male disappeared. Then I noticed a tiny young one with the female, who was feeding near the nest. It ran nimbly about her, and once she seemed to chase it for a few yards. After a while she ascended the mound alone and began scratching busily. She excavated several holes so deep as almost to conceal her from me, alternately scratching with her feet and probing with her bill. I momentarily expected to see a chick unearthed, but, unfortunately, in the midst of her labours she took alarm at something and hurriedly left the scene. I also left my cramped hiding-place and, as I walked away I flushed the young one from the spot where I had seen it with the parent half an hour before. It ran a short distance and then flew with ease to a branch twelve or fifteen feet above my head.

Another day I surprised a Brush-Turkey in the act of scratching on the mound, and, on examining the latter, I found an egg partly uncovered at the bottom of a hole left by the bird. This egg I removed and then replaced and covered up. A fortnight later I exhumed it and found it cracked and containing a fully-matured but dead chick. Probably the failure to hatch was due in some way to my interference.

These observations, I think, establish my conclusion that the Brush-Turkeys assist the exit of their young from the

mound-nest either (possibly) by uncovering the egg at the moment of hatching or (more probably) by repeatedly digging down to the eggs, so as to keep the mound material (sticks and leaves) so loose as to make the young one's emergence by its own efforts comparatively easy.—C. H. H. JERRARD, R.A.O.U., Brynebool, Preston, Qld., 29 4 33.

**Black-capped Petrel.**—Occurring, or formerly occurring about the North Atlantic and Caribbean Seas, and breeding in the West Indies (Haiti, Guadeloupe and Dominica) and Bermuda, this exceedingly rare bird, the Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*), has little claim to be placed on the Australian list. Yet according to one authority at least, a specimen has been obtained in Australian seas. In the tenth edition of the Rev. C. A. Johns' *British Birds in Their Haunts*, 1890, is the following note:—

"A very small number of Capped Petrels have been obtained, of which one was taken in Australian seas and the others were brought from the West Indies. The only specimen observed in Great Britain was captured . . . near Swaffham, in Norfolk." It would be very interesting to know just where this Australian specimen was taken and also what has become of it, as the *Checklist* does not recognize it, nor does Alexander, in his *Birds of the Ocean*, include Australia in the range of this bird.—A. E. BRIDGEWATER, R.A.O.U., Mansfield, Vic.

*Editor's Note*

The Black-capped Petrel here referred to must not be confused with the bird to which the same vernacular name is applied by Mr. Stidolph in the last paragraph of his article in this part on the effect of civilization upon New Zealand bird-life (*q.v.*). Godman (*A Monograph of the Petrels*, 107-10) refers to the two forms as the Capped Fulmar and the Sunday Island Fulmar respectively; Alexander (*Birds of the Ocean*) uses Black-capped Petrel for *Pterodroma hasitata*, and includes the other as a sub-species (*Pterodroma externa cervicalis*) of the White-necked Petrel. Mr. Stidolph's trivial name is taken from Oliver (*New Zealand Birds*).—Ed.

**Nest in Mine Shaft.**—The Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*) appears to prefer, for a nesting site, the centre of some "suckers" growing from the stump of a cut or broken eucalypt. At Wandin, Victoria, a pair built in a large letter-box and reared the young successfully. That was merely a curious incident; but at Chiltern, Victoria, where there are many abandoned shafts, the Thrush has taken to building on suitable ledges therein, as far, in some cases, as six feet below the level of the ground. How such a habit could arise in a species which otherwise builds above the surface is puzzling. Perhaps some light may be thrown upon the subject by the fact that at South Morang, Victoria, in the steep-sided Smugglers' Gully, Grey Thrushes have

more than once been found nesting on ledges. If that habit is general (which I am unable to say), then from the ledge on the side of a steep gully it would be no great step to using a similar site in a man-made shaft. It would be interesting to hear of this species making similar use of shafts in other localities.—E. S. HANKS, R.A.O.U., Coburg, Vic., 5.3.33.

**Daylight Killing by Winking Owl.**—On Sunday, May 21, 1933, while walking through the golf links at Glenroy, I heard a commotion among the birds and running to the tree from whence it came I found a Winking Owl (*Ninox connexans*)\* with a Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) in its claws. The Starling was still struggling, but rapidly becoming weaker. The time was then about 2 p.m. After my following the Owl from tree to tree for about ten minutes it finally settled in its usual roosting tree. It did not seem to be in a hurry to eat its prey but would pull out a few feathers from the bird now and again. When flying from tree to tree the Owl kept its kill held well up under its breast so that it was difficult to see that it carried anything. When the Owl was perching the Starling was held by the head with one foot.

When the Owl commenced to eat its kill it started from the neck and cleaned all the flesh from the breast down. While the breast-bone and legs were being eaten I could hear the bird breaking off pieces of bone. The entrails were then eaten. Although all the feathers were picked off the breast, the feathers of the back and wings, with the exception of a few which fell out, were eaten with the flesh and bones. The head was eaten last. The bird ate daintily, tearing off small portions and eating them leisurely. The time taken from when the bird was caught until the Owl finished eating it was three hours fifteen minutes.

The Owl was first noticed in the links on March 19. Since it has been there numbers of ejected pellets have been found under some of the trees. The pellets consisted mainly of cockchafer and cricket casing, while some of them contained fur, feathers and small bones.—W. HEATHCOTE, R.A.O.U., Pascoe Vale, Vic., 20.5.33.

**Tropic Petrels.**—In looking through a private log which I kept many years ago during a voyage from San Francisco, round Cape Horn, and up to Britain through the Atlantic, and in which are many notes on cetaceans, birds and other animals, I came across a reference to a Petrel of which we captured two specimens for examination. A flock of these

\*Difficult of distinction from the Boobook Owl (*N. boobook*) in the field. —Ed.

had kept in our wake for days, apparently never resting day or night. According to a book possessed by the Chief Officer, who had a taste for natural history, the birds were Leach's Storm Petrel (*Thalassidroma leachii*), and the description was: Seven inches in length, of a brownish-black colour, with grey transverse bands on the wings, and white on the tail, which is forked. The size is intermediate between the large Tropic Petrel (*T. tropica*) and the small Stormy Petrel (*T. pelagica*) of which last we saw hundreds in the Southern Ocean. When laid gently on their backs, the captured birds would remain quietly in that position for a minute or two, but on reviving from this short trance, one was very pugnacious, biting savagely at the fingers. The bill was long, black, hooked at the extremity, and surmounted with tubular nostrils. After examination the birds were liberated.

This was in the Atlantic, Lat. 3° 46' S., Long. 30° 4' W.

The only books in which I can find this species referred to are Collingwood's *Rambles of a Naturalist* (1868), in which he says that the most plentiful bird on approaching the East African coast was the Fork-tailed Petrel (*Thalassidroma leachii*), which was first observed 1300 miles west of Java Head, where the only intervening land was the Keeling Islands, and a volume of the *Orient Line Guide* (1889) which has a chapter on "Nature at Sea", by Middleton-Wake, F.L.S., in which he says, "Fork-tailed Petrel (*Procellaria leachii*): General plumage, sooty-black with white above the tail, which has a long fork. Atlantic, strays into Mediterranean." No mention is made of a Tropic Storm-Petrel, which, according to the Chief Officer's volume (name forgotten), is rather larger than the Fork-tailed species.

It would be interesting to know what are the present-day names of these two Petrels, and whether they are ever found west of the American continent as well as east of it. —H. STUART DOVE, R.A.O.C., West Devonport, Tas., 6 3 33.

*Thalassidroma leachii* — *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (Leach's Storm-Petrel); Bering Sea, North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans, south in winter to Japan, Mexico, Brazil, occasionally to Cape of Good Hope. *T. pelagica* — *Hydrobates pelagicus* (British Storm-Petrel); Eastern North Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas, south in winter to Red Sea and west coast of Africa, occasionally to Greenland, Labrador, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Cape of Good Hope and Zanzibar. *T. tropica* — *Fregata tropica* (Gould Storm-Petrel); southern oceans, north to the tropics—includes Australian seas.—Ed.

The above distributions of the three species are taken from W. B. Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean*. —Ed.

**Unusual Nesting Site of *Sericornis frontalis*.**—The White-browed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis frontalis*) is usually associated with creek-sides and dense undergrowth, especially

during the all-important task of rearing a family, when the parents usually consider a secluded retreat essential. A few years ago, early in October, a pair was discovered nesting in a small tangle of rank grass at the foot of an ornamental tree in the house garden, a most unusual situation for such birds to choose. At the time the nest contained young which were safely reared, although a dog caused the parents much worry by sleeping a few inches away. At the end of November of the same year the birds nested again, this time in a very small area of rank grass only a few yards from the kitchen door, and but one yard from a gate which was being used almost every hour of the day. Unfortunately the grass was being cleaned up when the nest was discovered, and the birds deserted it, although the eggs were partly incubated. At other times of the year, too, Scrub-Wrens show a fearless disregard for man, especially during gardening operations, when they forage about, seeking small worms and insects almost from under the spade. "White ants" are considered a great delicacy, judging by the number that a party of the birds devoured when an old post was uprooted. At this feast they were ably assisted by a number of Blue Wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*).—A. E. BRIDGEWATER, R.A.O.U., Mansfield, Vic., 5.5.33.

**Glossy Black Cockatoo.**—The Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) is fairly plentiful in this district, frequenting the forest oak (*Casuarina*) country and feeding chiefly, if not entirely, on the seeds of the oak. Hence its local name of "Nutcracker." The cones containing seed are not hard, however, but tough and woody, so that the birds chew rather than crack the cones, and the ground below favoured trees is thickly carpeted with the husks. The birds will allow a close approach while feeding, so that I often watch them with never-failing interest. It is a remarkable fact that they always use the left foot to hold the cones, which they turn and twist while chewing at them with their powerful mandibles. They feed quietly, and often the only indication of their presence is a clicking sound as they work away on the cones, but when there is a young one present it keeps up a continuous squeaking and makes no attempt to feed itself. Generally they are seen in twos and threes and even when they come together in a flock of a dozen or so the family units remain unbroken.

Their flight, from tree to tree, looks laboured but there is a peculiar buoyancy about it that I have noticed in no other bird. They can appear graceful enough at times, as when, with expanded and down-curved wings, they sweep down from the tops for their evening drink, the while uttering their creaking call. For several years I searched in vain for a nest, and bushmen questioned on the

subject had never heard of one being found. However, early in 1932 I was talking to a neighbour, Mr. Carter, who told me he had seen the birds about likely hollows and promised to keep a look-out. On April 10, 1932, Mr. Carter sent word that he had found a nest only a quarter of a mile from his house, so next day I went over, accompanied by a good climber, Harry Johnston. The nesting hollow was nearly 70 feet from the ground in the main trunk of a tall dead white gum standing on an open flat and about one hundred yards from the Pigna Barney River. The female would not flush when the tree was tapped, but did so when a stone thrown up struck a branch just below the entrance hole.

A high wind was blowing at the time, and the old tree rocked and swayed, but Harry Johnston was soon 50 feet up the tree, as far as the rope ladder would go. From there he managed to throw a line over a branch at the nest, and so hauled up the ladder, a difficult feat, requiring steady nerves. The single egg was placed on the earthy material at the bottom of the hollow, three feet from the entrance. With the egg safely packed away, we turned our attention to getting the ladder down, but a rung caught in the rotten wood on top of the branch, and as jerking at it rocked the tree dangerously, Johnston had to slide down the rope, of which there was plenty attached to the ladder. We thought it was a case of having to fell the tree to rescue our ladder, but after a great deal of manoeuvring it came down with a run.

Mr. Carter had some interesting observations to make on the finding of the nest. He had noticed the birds about the flat, and it is worth mentioning that on one occasion he saw them feeding on the seeds of a small "apple tree" (*Angophora*). On April 3 he went over late in the evening and knocked vigorously on the big eucalypt, the only likely tree about, but without result. However, he sat down to wait and almost immediately heard the creaking call of the male and saw it sweeping down from the "top" country, a thousand feet above. On looking up at the hollow, he was surprised to see the female, and presently she flew out to a nearby tree, where she was fed by the male. This same performance was witnessed on several evenings, the male sometimes coming from the Tomalla Tops, on the opposite side of the river, a continuation of the famous Barrington Tops, some 20 miles south. When the female was flushed on April 11 she flew from tree to tree up towards the tops and did not return until late in the afternoon. She could then be heard scratching about in the hollow, and was fed as usual by the male at sundown, returning again to the hollow while her mate flew off to his roosting tree by the river.

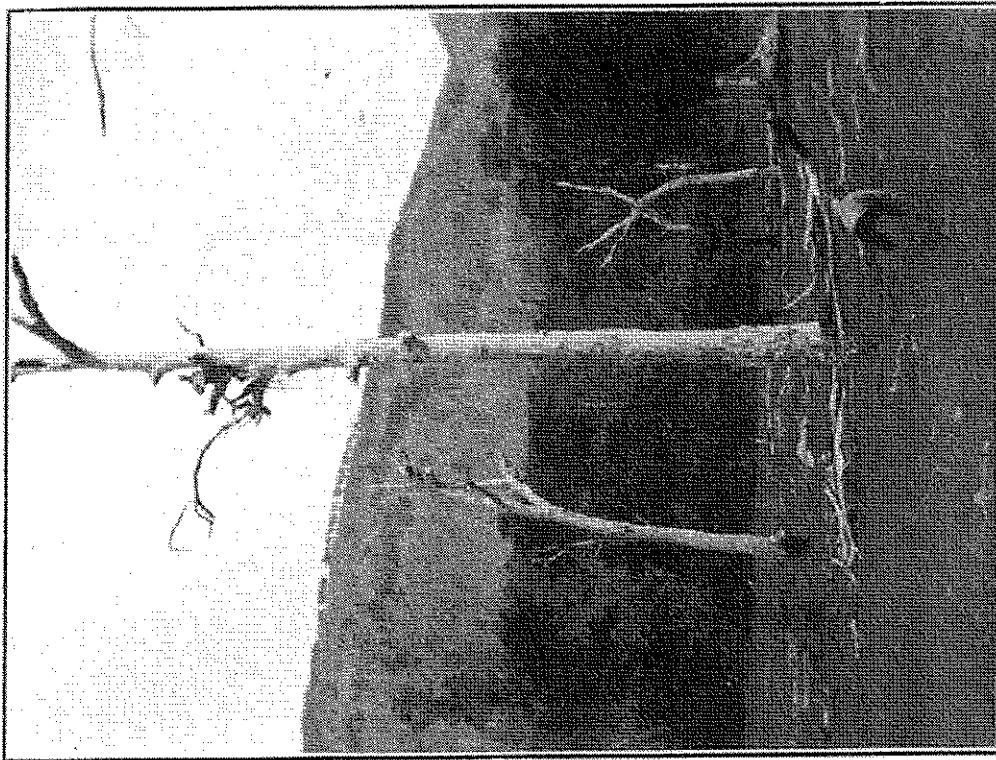
This pair of birds nested again, in the top of a tall, sheltered tree a couple of hundred yards from their first nest, and no doubt eventually reared a young one.

On May 5, whilst out mustering, my brother noticed a Cockatoo fly from a dead tree and as I was near the place next day, I went over and tapped the butt of the tree, a dead stringybark. A Glossy Cockatoo flushed from the top, where it was broken clean off about 50 feet from the ground. Two days later Harry Johnston climbed to this nest and found, about four feet down from the top, a young one clothed in yellow down and apparently just hatched, as the two pieces of egg shell were still in the hollow. Like the previous nest, this one was situated in open country, so that the birds apparently like to get away from the heavy forest for breeding purposes.—E. L. HYEM, R.A.O.U., Mernot, Barrington, N.S.W., 15 2 33.

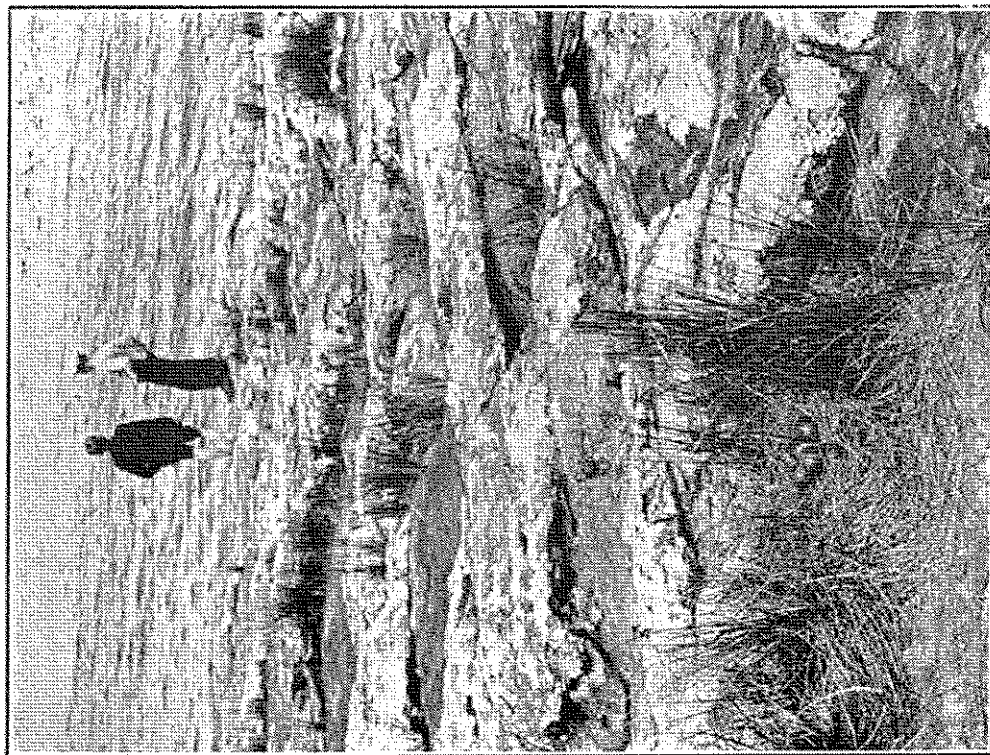
**Tasmanian Notes.**—A Spotted Owl (*Ninox nova-zeelandiae*) was found with two partly-fledged young in a hollow limb, at the end of October, 1932, at Lewisham, southern Tasmania. A pair of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Calyptrorhynchus fuliginosus*) brought their three young ones to the school grounds at Forcett in the first week of November, 1932. The young were roughly fledged and accompanied their parents to the tall wattle trees growing at one end of the school grounds. One parent took one youngster and the other the remaining two. The older birds searched along the wattle limbs whilst their offspring kept up continual screeching, beseeching cries. If the parents were longer than usual in securing a "grub" the youngsters "flopped" along to them and screeched harder and louder and flapped their wings to attract attention. Occasionally the old birds wearied of this and flew off to another tree, but were immediately followed by their insatiable young. It is worth noting that these young birds had been hatched in the early spring. In the Epping Forest district these Cockatoos commenced to nest in November, so that the birds under notice were very early. They stayed for some weeks in the adjacent wattle and gum paddocks.

Recently, when returning from the beach, I flushed a Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus walliens*) from the herbage at the edge of the shore. It flew a short distance and dropped into a tangle of shorter scrub.

In October a local lad reported finding a nest of Spur-winged Plover (*Lobihya nova-hollandiae*) situated on Clyde Island, which is separated from the mainland by kelp-lined water channels that may be crossed at low tide. The four eggs were placed in a scanty tussock growing in a fissure of the rock, well out in an open space which is occasionally



At the nest of a Glossy Black Cockatoo.  
Photo. by E. L. Hyem, R.A.O.U.



Nest of Spur-winged Plover.  
Photo. by Miss J. A. Fletcher, R.A.O.U.



swept by foam when a strong south-east gale is on. I visited the nest to obtain photographs. When the time came to take the young ones I found them running about, rough seas having prevented my crossing in time to photograph them whilst hatching. With the assistance of two boys with me, we captured the little ones and placed them back in the nest. The parents, screaming above, helped considerably in our task of capturing the young, their warning cries causing the young to remain crouched. Passing by an hour later we saw a baby Plover running on the lower platform, having evidently fallen from the cliffs twenty feet or so above. He looked a pathetic mite against the rocky walls with the foam breaking a few feet from him. We caught him and placed him with his family on top. Their food problem puzzled me. The island is a bare half acre, with but little soil, in which subsist a few sheoaks, "pig-face" weed and a small freshwater soakage occupied by coarse reeds and tussocks. In a fortnight, the family, by then only three, had been removed to a paddock a quarter of a mile away. I do not know how the parents managed to transport the young ones for it would be impossible for the little creatures to cross the watery gulches.

A pair of Double-banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) nested on a corner of the Seven-mile Beach. The female was sitting in early December, 1932, and the young were safely hatched.\*—(MISS) J. A. FLETCHER, R.A.O.C., Eaglehawk Neck, Tasmania.

\*The Double-banded Dotterel breeds normally in New Zealand and there is no prior definite record of its nesting in Australia or Tasmania. The late Col. Legge considered that it probably nested on some of the islands in Bass Strait—see *Nests and Eggs*, Campbell, at p. 790. Ed.

Miss Fletcher was communicated with relative to her record, and, after the setting up of the foregoing, replied as follows:

"I did not see the Double-fronted Dotterel, mentioned in paragraph, myself, but the occurrence was reported by a lad of eighteen, a keen nature observer, who knows the ordinary Dotterels well, and their nests, having found many. He was so struck with the different appearance of this pair, the double bands particularly impressing him, that he came to see my sister to ask her about the birds, as he had never found one of their nests before. She communicated with me, and I identified the bird from her description. One couldn't go wrong. He also described the difference in the eggs from those of the Red-capped and Hooded, which he knew well.

One January I came upon a pair of the Double-banded on the beach near Fossil Bluff, at Wynyard, with two young ones in down. I mentioned this to Colonel Legge, and he said he believed these birds bred in the Straits Islands, and saw no reason why they should not also do so here.

I came upon partly-grown young ones of the Double-banded, with a flock of the same, when camping for a few days at Sisters Creek Beach, near Rocky Cape. This was in the month of March. Not sure of the year from memory, and can't lay my hands on the records at present, but think it was 1918."

**Further Addition to *Systema Avium Australasianarum*.**  
—Under date February 18, 1933, Mr. Gregory M. Mathews forwarded the following notes received too late for publication in the list of corrections, etc., published in Vol. XXXII, p. 282:—

To the *Systema Avium Australasianarum*, Vol. I, 1927, p. 230, add this new bird to the Australian Avifauna—

***Piscatrix nicolli*, White-tailed Red-footed Booby.**

*Distr.*: Madagascar, Mauritius, Glorioso Island (breeding); Little Cayman Island, West Indies (breeding); and Aliipata, Western Samoa (breeding); Raine Island, Queensland: Navigator Island; Henderson Island.

***Piscatrix nicolli nicolli* (Gr. and M. Praed).**

*Sula nicolli* Grant and Mackworth-Praed, Bull. Brit. Orn. Club, Vol. LIII, p. 118, Feb. 22nd, 1933. Glorioso Island, north of Madagascar, Indian Ocean.

*Distr.*: Madagascar and waters adjacent.

***Piscatrix nicolli grantana* subsp. nov.**

Differs from *P. n. nicolli* above in having the under parts rather paler, more pure ash-colour.

Type from Raine Island, Queensland, and is the specimen mentioned by Grant as above.

*Distr.*: Raine Island; Navigator Island and Henderson Island.

P. 115, add Genus ***Paranectris***

*Paranectris*, Iredale, Austr. Zool., Vol. VI, Pt. 2, p. 115, Jan. 14, 1930. Type (by original designation) *Proc. griseus* Gm.

**Movement of Flame Robins.**—On April 9, 1933, I had the good fortune to see the Flame Robins (*Petroica phoenicea*) arrive at Glenroy, Victoria, on what was possibly their seasonal migration from the mountain districts in central Victoria to the lowlands. I was in the Northern golf links at 6.20 p.m. when the birds began to arrive. They came in parties of from twelve to fifteen birds, flying low along the ground and from the north. I counted eleven parties of birds and I am certain that there were other parties besides those which I observed. As each party of birds arrived its members flew into the trees bordering the links and settled down for the night. The next evening I made a tour of the links to find out how many of the birds had remained but I could find only thirty-seven birds although I had seen many more arrive the night before. They remained in the links until about April 13, when the first birds were observed outside the links boundary.—W. HEATHCOTE, R.A.O.C., Pascoe Vale, Vic., 29 5 33.

**Notes on the Wedgebill.**—In their recent paper on the Mallee Whipbird, Messrs. Howe and Ross refer to the question, "Has the Wedgebill ever been recorded from Victoria?" *The Official Checklist* includes "Int. Vic." in the range of the bird. Leach, in *An Australian Bird Book*, includes it in the seventh edition as occurring in the interior of each State, and as it is not included in the earlier editions there is an implication that a definite record from Victoria had been established.\* There seems no reason why it should not be found in the Mallee districts of Victoria as well as in New South Wales and South Australia.

My only experience with the Wedgebill was on the Bulloo River, near Quilpie, Queensland, in June, 1932. I expected to come across it, but spent some weeks in fruitless search. One evening, just before dark, I saw two birds fly into a patch of thick mulga. At first I mistook them for Chestnut-crowned Babblers, which abound in the district. Before they vanished, however, I noted that their tails were longer and wider than those of the Babbler. A few weeks later I heard the calls of a strange bird proceeding from an isolated clump of lignum on a small plain. I went at once on foot to investigate. I found the thicket to be roughly circular, about twenty yards in diameter and almost impenetrable. As I started to work my way towards the stranger, which was still calling, several rabbits ran out and the noise ceased. A party of Wrens was creeping about just in front of me: most of them were "browns", but finally a beautiful male came into view for a few seconds. He was identified as the Purple-backed (*Malurus assimilis*), but vanished almost immediately, and was not seen again. He was much more wary than his "wives", and appeared to be the only adult male in the family.

After a good deal of careful stalking, rendered doubly difficult by the carpet of dry twigs, I came in sight of the bird I was after. It was perched on a twig two feet above the ground, singing at intervals. The notes resembled those of the Horsfield Bush-Lark (*Mirafra javanica*), but the volume was much greater. The bird was undoubtedly a Wedgebill. Against the dark background it appeared as a brownish-grey bird about the size of a Magpie-Lark, with an inconspicuous crest and a large tail.

After watching it in silence for some time, I disturbed it in order to observe its mode of flight. It flushed low down towards another patch of lignum, the wing beats being even and not very rapid. The tail was depressed and fanned.

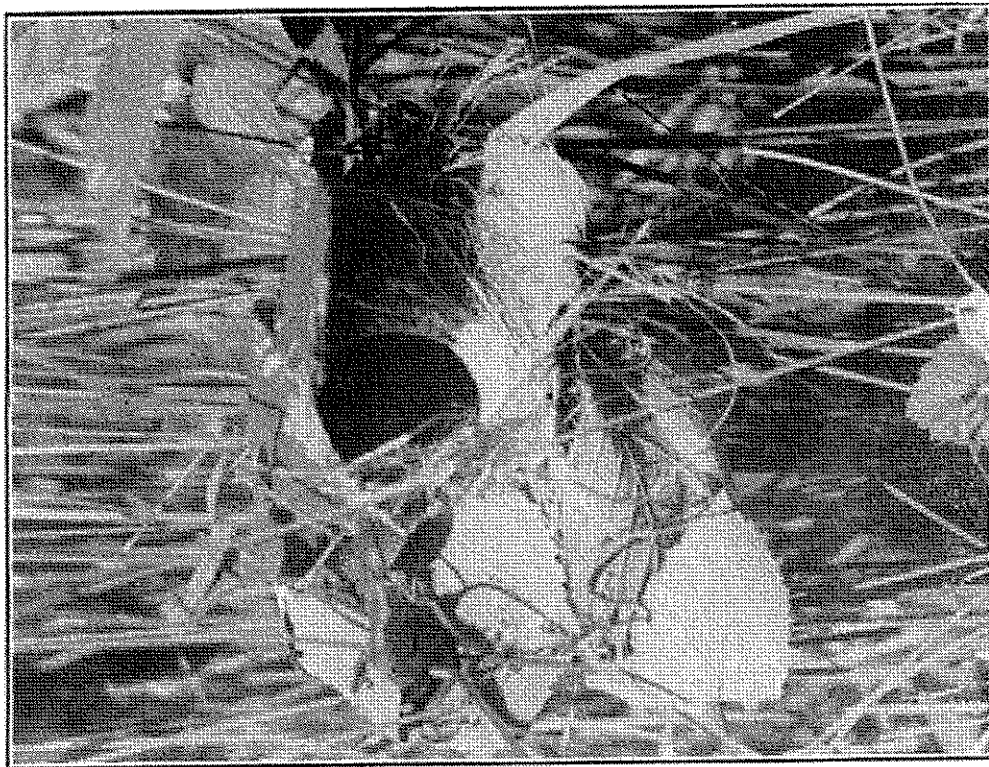
\*Leach followed *The Checklist*. There appears to be no definite record from Victoria to justify its inclusion in *The Checklist* from that State. Possibly, Messrs. Ross and Howe's belief that they had seen a Wedgebill in the Mallee country (dating back to 1920) was responsible for its inclusion. Those who had it included are no longer available.—Ed.

and the broad white tip on each feather identified it as the stranger which I had previously seen. A moment later I heard the calls of several birds proceeding from the place where the first had disappeared. I left them and turned my attentions to the *Malurus* family.—A. C. CAMERON, R.A.O.U., Biddeston, Qld.

**Australia's "Tailor-birds".**—If there is one Australian bird which, more than another, arouses admiration in respect of nest-building cleverness, it is the small *Cisticola celis*, known variously in the vernacular as the Golden-headed Fantail-Warbler—an altogether too cumbersome "official" name—corn-bird, swamp-warbler, and grass-warbler. Members of the R.A.O.U. party, who comprised the expedition of 1921 to Yeppoon and Byfield, Queensland, will recall how abundant these birds were in the tall, rank grass of the region, and how freely their strange songs, a mingling of gasping chirps and whistles, were heard as the tiny creatures fluttered, like so many golden butterflies, in the air above. Oddly enough, however, my experience of the birds at their nests was not gained in Queensland's free spaces, but hard by Sydney. During last summer, for example, Mr. J. S. P. Ramsay and I—accompanied on one occasion by Dr. W. Macgillivray—inspected at various times ten nests that were situated along the edge of the Dee Why lagoon, immediately north of Manly. The first two nests, both of which were discovered by Mr. Ramsay about the middle of November, were models of their kind. One, built in reeds about a foot high, was constructed of fibre and had two large leaves from a shrub growing near by woven into the back wall. The leaves were not detached from the plant, and I have no doubt that the "tailor-birds" chose the situation especially to avail themselves of that leafy support. The second nest, even more beautiful, was built in green grass away from a shrub of any kind; it was constructed entirely of the fluffy substance from dandelions, and was supported by grass-stems stitched into the rear, the "thread" apparently being strands from spiders' webs.

A month later, on December 17, we inspected no fewer than six nests, four of which were supported by the leaves of blackberry bushes. A week later again I glanced casually at one of the nests, and, noting that baby mouths were no longer to be seen, I commenced to cut the nest down, whereupon, to my astonishment, three eggs were revealed. I tied the nest up again, but later found that it had been deserted, probably because the leaves around had withered as a result of the cutting. Two points appear to emerge from this experience: (1) that the birds sometimes use the same nest for two broods, and (2) that they insist on *green* leaves\* as

\*Might not the interference, apart from the withering of leaves, have caused the desertion?—Ed.



Nest of *Cisticola exilis* with 23 blackberry leaves stitched together to form the outer covering.



Nest of *Cisticola exilis*, showing blackberry leaves threaded into walls. A second clutch of eggs was laid in this nest.

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

nesting material, and in most cases choose their sites accordingly.

The most remarkable nest I have seen, however, was one which I secured after the young had departed. This quaint structure was almost entirely composed of blackberry leaves, there being no fewer than twenty-three stitched together in highly artistic fashion. Most of the leaves averaged two inches long by one inch wide. All but four or five were completely sewn into the nest, the minority being attached only by their tips. Three leaves, forming the hood, had the green side facing outwards, whereas all the others had the under side showing. This seemed to be a matter of convenience rather than taste. The body of the nest was about the size of a tennis ball, and the chamber, beautifully fashioned among all those leaves, was soft and cosy with whitish fibre and webbing. Has anyone watched these birds at their stitching? There seems to be no room for doubt that the bill is used as a needle, and that spiders' strands are threaded through the tiny holes, and then tied or fixed by the birds in workmanlike fashion.—A. H. CHISHOLM, C.F.A.O.U., Melbourne, Vic., 9 6 33.

**Unusual Nests and Nesting Sites.**—While indexing my volumes of *The Emu*, it occurred to me that if all the accounts of unusual nests and nesting sites were collected into one article, they may interest members, particularly new members and those who do not possess a complete set of *The Emu*. My own set is not complete, although nearly so. Perhaps someone will write up those instances, if any, which were reported in Volumes I, II, III, IV, and XX.

In Volume V, page 157, is an account of a Grey Thrush nesting in the wicker from a demijohn; of a Pipit and a Little Crane utilizing old jam tins; of a Swallow building in a pair of old trousers hanging up in a shed. Then there is the Rifle Bird which embellished its nest with the cast-off skin of a snake (Vol. VII, p. 204). A Starling's nest, containing one egg, was found in the wool of a live sheep (Vol. X, p. 299); a Swallow's nest under a railway carriage which was in use every day (Vol. XI, p. 211); a Sparrow's nest in a guard's van (Vol. XXII, p. 75); and Ducks' nests in old rabbit-burrows (Vol. XI, p. 215). Masked Finches, in the Gulf of Carpentaria area, are reported (Vol. XIII, pp. 100 and 195) to place lumps of charcoal in their nests. This may not be "unusual," because all the nests of Masked Finches that were found contained charcoal.

Hundreds of White Cockatoos (Vol. XIII, p. 120) used to make their nests in the cliffs of the River Murray near Cournamont. Evidently the Starling is not to blame for monopolizing the trees, because the Cockatoos were men-

tioned, a long time ago, by Gould. I wonder if their descendants are there to-day. A Magpie-Lark's nest built without mud seems extraordinary, but in Volume XIV, p. 170, appears a photograph of such a nest and a statement that it was made of wet cow-dung, feathers, dry grass, wool, and a little clay.

In Volume XV, page 148, is a statement that a nest was found in a trench during the Great War—one of several, I believe—and on page 189 is a photograph of a Flame Robin nesting in a tobacco tin, which had been nailed to a wall. Another photograph on page 258 depicts the nest of a White-browed Wood-Swallow on a coil of wire-netting. A photograph of a Scrub-Wren's nest in a frying-pan appears facing page 191 of Volume XVI, and in the same Volume, on page 176, is one of a Yellow-tailed Thornbill's nest built in a fence. A pair of Swallows built a nest on the bill of a dead Eagle which had been hanging in an outhouse (Vol. XVII, p. 215). On page 235 of that Volume is a sad story of a pair of Swallows that built a dead Swallow into their nest. From the account it seems that the dead bird was once the mate of one of the others, or at any rate the original owner of the nest.

Old kitchen utensils seem to be valued by birds as nesting sites. An old kettle was used (Vol. XXI, p. 143) several times by a pair of Brown Tree-Creepers; and a pair of Buff-tailed Thornbills constructed a nest in an old rusty safe, which was hanging on a shrub (Vol. XXIII, p. 72). In the same Volume at page 216 a Striped Brown Hawk is stated to have laid its eggs on the top of a nest of a stick-nest-building rat; on page 237 a Black Duck's nest was placed in that of either a Crow or a Hawk; and on page 321 a Yellow Robin has festooned its nest with pieces of newspaper instead of the usual streamers of bark. A pair of Yellow-tailed Thornbills (Vol. XVI, p. 196) and a pair of Brown Treecreepers (Vol. XXVIII, p. 229), which birds usually nest in bushes and hollow branches respectively, chose holes in the ground for their nests. This was more unusual in the Thornbills than in the Treecreepers. Another Yellow Robin (Vol. XXIX, p. 227) decorated its nest with pieces of newspaper; a Swallow (Vol. XXIX, p. 75) built on the top of a door of a church; and a Black-tailed Water-Hen (Vol. XXII, p. 28) nested in a kerosene case. A Willie-Wagtail (Vol. XXVIII, p. 191) built its nest inside a Swallow's which was in a cowshed.

In a kerosene tin, cut on the side, a Magpie (Vol. XXX, p. 96) constructed a comfortable nest from clippings of galvanized iron and pieces of wire, and lined it with horsehair, feathers and paper. In Volume XXX, facing page 168, is a curious photograph of the nests of a Blackbird and a Thrush

joined together; the Thrush's was evidently made later than the Blackbird's, because the latter's eggs were infertile. The Willie-Wagtail is prominent again as a selector of unusual nesting sites in Volume XXX, p. 306. On this occasion she chose a piece of wire, slung between two rafters of a barn, as a perch for her nest.

In Volume XXXI, on page 270 we are told of the Magpie that placed its nest on a stone wall; on page 206 of Fairy Martins building in an old steam boiler; and on page 304 of Tree Martins nesting in the sail cover of a boat.

The latest reported curiosity is in Volume XXXII, p. 66. This relates how a Willie Wagtail built on a rail of a pen overhanging a sheep dip, remained during the dipping of the sheep, and hatched out her clutch.—MARC COHN, R.A.O.U., Bendigo, Vic.

*Editor's Note*

On page 13 of Volume II is an account of Whitefaces nesting in a wood heap and others in garden refuse. Vol. II also has records of singular nesting sites of Crimson Finches—one in the thatch of a grass-built hut, occupied at the time (p. 29), and the other in a rug hanging in a tree (p. 56).

In Vol. III at page 93 are records as follow of unusual nesting sites of Swallows:—Inside the ridge board of a shearing shed immediately above the sheep in the sweating pens; on top of three pannikins hung from a nail inside a store; behind broken skirting of a cabin of a wrecked vessel two miles from shore; under hatches on top of the bulkhead of a 6-ton cutter used in the locality described in the article in which the instances are given. On several occasions the boat sailed with a nest containing eggs or young, and the old birds followed it—on one occasion for thirty-five miles and back. On ledges of timber lining wells, even when water was regularly being drawn, were other favourite situations.

On page 16 of Volume IV is a reference to a Dusky Robin that built in a corner where a school verandah joined a house. A case of a Grey Shrike-Thrush nesting in a mine shaft is recorded in this part. Mr. Cohn does not record the incident of a Flame Robin nesting in a landing net described in Vol. XXX, p. 211.

**Additions to the Union's Egg Collection.**—Since the times when collectors visited several unfrequented and widely-separated parts of Australia searching for material for the splendid collection of eggs which the late H. L. White bequeathed to the Melbourne Museum, additions to the Union's egg collection have not been numerous, but recently the following six clutches were received from Miss J. A. Fletcher, of Eaglehawk Neck, Tasmania: Lewin Water Rail (*Rallus pectoralis*), 5, 4; Australian Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*), 5; Spotless Crake (*P. plumbea*), 4, 3; and Southern Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*), 3. Miss Fletcher's thoughtfulness and generosity have been much appreciated, and it is hoped that other members of the Union who are particularly interested in the oological branch of ornithology will, when occasions arise, follow her example.—J. A. ROSS, R.A.O.U., Melbourne, Vic., 9 6 33.



**Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike Hovering.**—On February 19 and 26 I observed two Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Coracina nova-hollandiae*) hovering like the Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*). Noticing that some of these hovering flights were of long duration I decided to time some and found that the flights varied from fifteen seconds down to a few wing beats, according to the time it took to find an insect. The birds were feeding on grasshoppers. The method of hovering was to beat steadily with the wings while keeping the tail depressed and spread out. While the Kestrel is hovering the wings are moved in an exaggerated vibration but with the "Black-face" it is a deep steady beat. The birds were feeding in this manner before I arrived and I watched them for over an hour. They were still feeding when I left. While they were hovering they kept turning their heads from side to side, sweeping the ground with one eye. When an insect was sighted the bird would fold its wings and drop swiftly down. When close to the ground the bird would open its wings, using them as a "brake", so as not to hit the ground too hard. It would then pounce on the insect and take it in its bill and fly to the nearest tree some little distance away to consume it. This it would do by hitting it on the branch to kill it and then swallowing it whole. The only reason that I can advance is that there were no trees immediately near this patch of grass providing an observation post from which the birds could watch for grasshoppers and other insects. The birds were hovering at a height of about twelve feet and averaged a flight about each two minutes.

I have often noticed the Nankeen Kestrel, Restless Flycatcher and Eastern Spinebill hovering but this is the first time I have noticed the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.—W. HEATHCOTE, R.A.O.U., Pascoe Vale, Vic.

Although not a common action of the bird, there are nevertheless a number of records of *Coracina nova-hollandiae* hovering as described. Ed.

**An Unusual "Accident".**—It is not often that one finds, by treading on it, a bird that is being sought for, yet that is what happened to a companion, Mr. R. Emerson, R.A.O.U., and me. We had been out all day on a patch of heath country in French's Forest with the object of making a list of the birds that occurred there. The task was almost completed and only one or two birds that we expected to list remained to be seen. Of these the Painted Quail (*Turnix varia*) was one and after much searching we were about to give up when we heard a fluttering just behind us. We turned and saw our subject, now unfortunately breathing its last. One of us had accidentally trodden on it.—G. R. GANNON, R.A.O.U., Artarmon, N.S.W.

**The Swift in Flight.**—Accounts have come to hand of great companies of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) appearing near Mangan (a mining township near the east coast) and Evandale (twelve miles south-east of Launceston) in the last week of March. The air is described as having been filled with the birds as far as the eye could see, some fairly low down, others at a great height. Here at Devonport I have seen only one small party of about a dozen near Mersey Bluff—on March 21--and they were not migrating but heading east, perhaps to join the great assemblage near Launceston. When I first came to live by the Mersey, however, vast flights of these birds were seen for several autumns. One is particularly impressed on my memory, when the whole atmosphere between South Devonport and the wooded hills towards Mt. Roland seemed a living mass of Swifts gliding, wheeling and soaring—a wonderful spectacle of gathering migrants. On another occasion I watched an almost continuous succession of these birds passing overhead towards the north-west at no great height until dark—and after—for the swish of the long wings could be heard when the fliers were no longer visible. Thousands must have passed in that stream, when they were leaving for the northern breeding grounds.—H. STUART DOVE, R.A.O.U., West Devonport, Tas., 15 4 33.

**Richard Atkins (1745-1820)—An Early Aviculturist.**—Many quaint natural history items may be gleaned from the early files of the *Sydney Gazette*, which commenced publication on March 5, 1803, and data of biographical and bibliographical importance may sometimes be quarried from this mine of information. Thus in the *Sydney Gazette*, Vol. I, No. 23, Sunday, August 7, 1803, second page, we read:—

“A Parrot of a species perfectly distinct from any hitherto found, was lately taken at Kissing Point, and is now in the possession of the Judge Advocate. Its size differs little from the Lowry, but the feather is by no means the same: those of the neck and breast are of a rich scarlet, with the head, wings, and tail of a clear straw colour. Whether this class may be possessed of the powers of Speech cannot yet be ascertained, but appearance declares it to be ‘a bird of promise’.”

Just what the Parrot referred to above actually was is a puzzle to local ornithologists. It may have been an albino hybrid or colour freak of some species common around Sydney in the early days.

The Judge Advocate was Richard Atkins. He seems to have been an aviculturist, as in the *Gazette* of September 11, 1803, a “Native Owl” is noted as being in his possession.

Also in the *Sydney Gazette* (June 3, 1804) can be read a curious story of “A Mountain Parrot belonging to Addy, a Settler on the Banks of Hawkesbury” which, being seized by a Hawk, was heard to cry “Oh the Hawk! Zounds the

*Hawk!*" This is told as an "extraordinary recital . . . too well vouched to . . . admit a doubt of its authenticity". It reminds one of the Parrot, attacked by Crows which were pulling out its feathers, and who cried "One at a time, gentlemen, please!"

The humour of that period would not long be tolerated nowadays, punning being indulged in to a painful extent. For instance, a bird called a "Sky-scraper" was apparently sold to a "professed amateur" who, in trying to identify it, "had every reason to conclude himself *Gull-ed*."—*Sydney Gazette*, September 9, 1804.

To return to our aviculturist, Richard Atkins, we find biographical details regarding him in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 1909, p. 91, and 1924, pp. 172-176, wherein his legal career and his shortcomings are noticed. He was a younger son of Sir William Bowyer, but took the surname Atkins under the will of Sir William Atkins. He was much to the fore in the Bligh-Macarthur controversy and was recalled in January, 1810. He returned to England with Bligh in 1810 and died there, insolvent, in November, 1820.

If as a legal luminary he did not shine very brightly, at least we may remember him as probably the first aviculturist in Australia, at a time when Emus and Black Swans were the only birds kept in captivity, and then only as adjuncts to the pantry.—GILBERT P. WHITLEY, Australian Museum, Sydney, N.S.W., 18 4 33.

**White-backed Magpie Killing a Pipit.**—When driving along a road near Mornington (Vic.) recently I witnessed the following incident, which coincides with certain observations appearing in recent numbers of *The Emu*.

My companion and I noticed a White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) fly past with a fairly large object in its bill. We stopped the car and alighted, by which time the Magpie had settled on the side of the road and was worrying or killing what later proved to be a Pipit or Ground-Lark (*Anthus australis*). As we approached the Magpie rose but again settled on the ground about fifty yards away; we followed and this time it flew off without the Pipit, which, when picked up, was dead. It appeared to be a perfectly healthy bird.

Both Black-backed and the White-backed Magpies are in the habit of capturing small birds and also mice—A. J. North, *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, Vol. II, Pt. I, 1906, p. 2 and p. 6. Whether one species is more partial to this kind of food than the other is a matter that would be difficult to prove. Mr. Bridgewater's notes (*The Emu*, Vol. XXXII, p. 116) and Mr. Gannon's observations (*ibid.*, p. 196) refer to the Black-backed Magpie. During the many

years I resided in the Bowral (N.S.W.) district, where this bird is common. I never knew it to pursue small birds. This tendency on the part of Magpies was noticed soon after the colony was established at Sydney in 1788, for on "Watling" painting No. 66 appear the following remarks relative to *G. tibicen*:—"...Native name, Larra-won-nang. This bird has a soft note not unlike the sound of a well-tuned flute. It is a bird of prey." (*Hist. Coll. Nat. Hist. Dept. British Museum*, Vol. II, 1906, p. 129.)—(MISS) DOREEN HORDERN, R.A.O.U., Darling Point, Sydney.

**Notes on the Occurrence of Raptores near Sydney, with particular regard to *Elanus scriptus*.**—In the early days of settlement in Australia, many birds inhabiting the region now known as Sydney were killed, as they were all novel to the settlers. The collectors of these early specimens are for the most part unknown, but some of the birds were drawn by one Watling, a talented convict who was in the service of John White, Esq., the first Surgeon-General of the infant colony. Some of the birds figured, notably the Emu and the Red-backed Wren (*Malurus melanocephalus*) have long since vanished from anywhere near the type locality. At least one other, the Letter-winged Kite (*Elanus scriptus*), was secured and figured when apparently far out of its normal habitat. The last-named species is a confirmed bird of the interior, but in March, 1933, I was at Botany Bay and saw an example of the Letter-winged Kite flying overhead. The bird is unmistakable, especially if flying at an altitude of a few hundred feet. When in north-western Queensland, where I came to know the species quite well, I found that at a high altitude the W-shaped markings on the under-wings were easier to distinguish than when the bird was flying very low. The Kite at Botany Bay flew leisurely across the water and finally disappeared towards the north-west.

My first experience with this interesting raptore was at Wallangarra, at the border between New South Wales and Queensland, and a few days later at Stanthorpe, Queensland, in February, 1932. Both of those localities, though considerably east of the usual range of *E. scriptus*, are over one hundred miles from the coast.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century an *Elanus* was caught at Sydney, and was figured by Watling. The particular bird was kept alive for about three months, during which time it was fed upon small birds and fish. It was upon Watling's drawing that Latham based his description in the *General Synopsis of Birds*, Supp. II, p. 42, in which is stated that "a large, long patch of black also occupies the whole of the inner part of the wing when closed. . . ." In the description by Latham in the *Supplementum Indicis*

*Ornithologici*, 1801, is the following: "28. *F(alco) axillaris*. F. corpore carulescente subtus albo, superciliis and axillaribus nigris." From the above extracts it will be seen that possibly the *Elanus axillaris* described by Latham was the bird we know as *E. scriptus*,\* and that it was undoubtedly secured near the coast. Mr. Gregory M. Mathews (*Birds of Australia*, Vol. V, p. 208) gives a reference to a female *E. scriptus*, which was collected at Wollongong, on the south coast of New South Wales, in June, 1893.

A week or so after my noting the occurrence of *E. scriptus* at Botany Bay, an example of the Black-shouldered Kite (*E. notatus* Gould = *E. axillaris* Lath.) was noted in the same locality; and while there is, perhaps, nothing very remarkable in that, it is interesting to note the bird's appearance so adjacent to the metropolis, for Hawks as a rule shun congested settlement. Other "country visitors" of the raptore clan noted lately by me have been *Astur fasciatus* and *Accipiter cirrocephalus*, and Mr. Neville Cayley tells me of an example of *Falco berigora* which he recently noted over the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The reason for the desertion of civilization by most varieties of raptorial birds is by no means difficult to find, for it is well known that whenever a Hawk or Eagle (whether beneficial or harmful) appears near an Australian habitation, the gun is generally immediately brought into action. The recent appearances, then, are not a little surprising, especially the cricket ground incident, when the Hawk hovered, apparently unafraid, over many thousands of spectators. —A. J. MARSHALL, R.A.O.U., Penshurst, N.S.W..

**Kingfisher and Snake.**—Early in the morning of January 14 my attention was attracted by the strange calls uttered by a Forest Kingfisher (*Haleyon macleayi*). From the unusual note I thought at first that the bird must be hurt, but when near the "apple" tree (*Angophora*) up which they frequently nested (in a termites' nest), I was surprised to see the bird swoop down and apparently hit the ground; this performance it repeated at the rate of about two swoops a minute. Every time it hit the ground it uttered the queer screech that had first attracted my attention.

Imagining that a young bird had fallen from the nest, and that the frantic parent was striving to rescue it, I hastened to its assistance, only to find in place of a fledgling a "green tree snake," between four and five feet long, lying perfectly still in the short grass. Seizing a stick to kill it, I was amazed to find that it was practically dead already, for its head was pierced literally through and through by the sharp beak of the Kingfisher. On February 1 four young

\*See Mathews, *The Birds of Australia*, Vol. V, p. 200 *et seq.*, on this point.—Ed.

birds left the nest which the parent had so valiantly defended—the second brood reared there this season.—F. M. IRBY, R.A.O.U., Casino, N.S.W., 1 2 33.

**Turnstones and Stint.**—During a recent visit to Anson's Bay (north-east coast, Tas.) I had the pleasure of observing two interesting Asiatic migrants at very close quarters. I refer to the Common Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and the Red-necked (Little) Stint (*Erolia ruficollis*).

It happened to be a season of very low tides on the east coast of Tasmania at the time, and the extensive mud-flats in Anson's Bay were quite bare, affording a fine feeding ground for waders. It was whilst passing down the narrow channel towards the mouth that I first noticed a flock of tiny birds scattered over the flat bordering the channel. Having a good pair of prism binoculars in the boat with me, I soon identified the birds as Little Stints, and as we were then within a little over a chain of many of them, my wife and I were able to get very close to these diminutive travellers. It was a perfect day, and the flock was resting. This gave us a good opportunity of observing the plumage, with the little collarette, snowy breast and belly, with the fawn colouring of the back and wing coverts. These birds were remarkably tame, for even with the noise of the exhaust of our twin-cylinder out-board motor as we passed by later, they took not the slightest notice of the boat.

This flock must have been on its way northwards, the date being April 26, and I was sorry not to see it in flight, for once seen at their marvellous aerial manoeuvres, these birds are never forgotten. By April 28 they had disappeared on another stage of their homing flight towards their vast breeding grounds. This species frequents at least four of the large tidal estuaries on the east coast of Tasmania, and I have previously observed it in company with the many other wading migrants on the tidal flats at George's Bay and Moulting Lagoon. Doubtless, it frequents the flats of Pittwater, and Ralph's Bay, farther south.

The Turnstones provided us with a very delightful entertainment, for whilst they were more shy, we were able to work the boat in to within sixty yards of nine of them busily engaged in searching for food, turning over the small stones in a most business-like manner. The first sight of this small flock was obtained when it settled on a sand-spit over 100 yards distant. I knew them to be some birds other than Dotterel, and immediately had the glasses on them; but before I could discern any of the chief distinguishing features of their plumage, they took flight past the boat, settling farther up the channel. Their note was different, and though I had never been at close quarters with them before, I knew that they must be Turnstones, for I caught a glimpse

of the dark patches on either side of the breast. Shortly afterwards I worked the boat quietly up to a point opposite where the flock was feeding in company with four Hooded Dotterels (*Charadrius cucullatus*).

With the aid of the binoculars, we then had a real treat in watching the Turnstones at the work from which they derive their name, and in admiring their lovely plumage, closely nearing the breeding shades, and remarking upon the peculiar woodpecker-like head and neck, evolved, doubtless, through their feeding habits. The distance was rather too great to note the form of the bill, and as I have only had a specimen in my hand once, and many years ago, being a bird shot by my late father at Ralph's Bay about 1888. I cannot remember just what is the chief characteristic of that member, but fancy it to be chisel-shaped at the extremity.\* The plumage of the wing-coverts and back was very beautiful, approximating somewhat to that of the Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*). By April 28 these lovely birds had also taken their departure. It was a very happy occasion to be able to get on such intimate terms with this most cosmopolitan of all our Asiatic visiting shore birds.—ROBT. W. LEGGE, R.A.O.U., Cullenswood, Tas., 7 5 33.

**Parrots in North-eastern Victoria.**—Several reports have been made of the presence of the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsoni*) this year in north-eastern Victoria. On May 22 I observed five of those birds (two adult males and three females or immature males) in the large red gums bordering the King River, a few miles south-east of Wangaratta. These birds are confined in habitat to the big timber (box and red gum) of the Riverina and the similar type of country along the Murray in Victoria, and are seldom found at any distance from water. The Wangaratta district is, of course, part of their natural habitat, but it is seldom that reports of their presence in Victoria come to hand, and it is probable that the birds I saw have been driven south by the extremely dry conditions in those parts of the Riverina where they are more plentiful. On the same day, and within a short distance of the spot where the "Green Leeks" were observed, a pair of Yellow Rosellas (*Platycercus flaveolus*) was seen. That species is resident in the district, however, and a nesting pair was observed by me within about seven miles of Wangaratta in August, 1932. These two species, both of which are only found in the limited area of the Murray Valley, are now, unfortunately, rare, especially in Victoria, and every report of their presence in this State is welcome.—R. S. MILLER, R.A.O.U., Bentleigh, Vic., 5 6 33.

\*Such is the case, nevertheless the bill of the Turnstone is not particularly outstanding in this respect.—Ed.

**Early Return of the Pallid Cuckoo.**—Near Raywood, Victoria, I saw a Pallid Cuckoo (*Cucullus pallidus*) on 10 6 33, which is a remarkably early date for the return of that Cuckoo to the Bendigo district. On looking through my volumes of *The Emu*, I am unable to find any earlier dates for any part of southern Australia except those reported by Mr. Serventy, of Perth, W.A. in the Migration Report (Vol. XXX, p. 26), viz., 7 6 25 and 4 6 26.

In the same volume, and on the same page, Mr. Gogerley, of Wallis Lake, N.S.W., reported that Pallid Cuckoos remained throughout the winter of 1925, and in Volume XXII, p. 279, Mr. McGilp, of South Australia, remarks that they are usually numerous from June to August in the Lake Frome district. Mr. McKeown, of Leeton, N.S.W., records (Vol. XXV, p. 109) that they arrived in large numbers in June, 1924, and (Vol. XXX, p. 26) an arrival in his district on 23 6 26.—MARC COHN, R.A.O.U., Bendigo, 20 6 33.

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