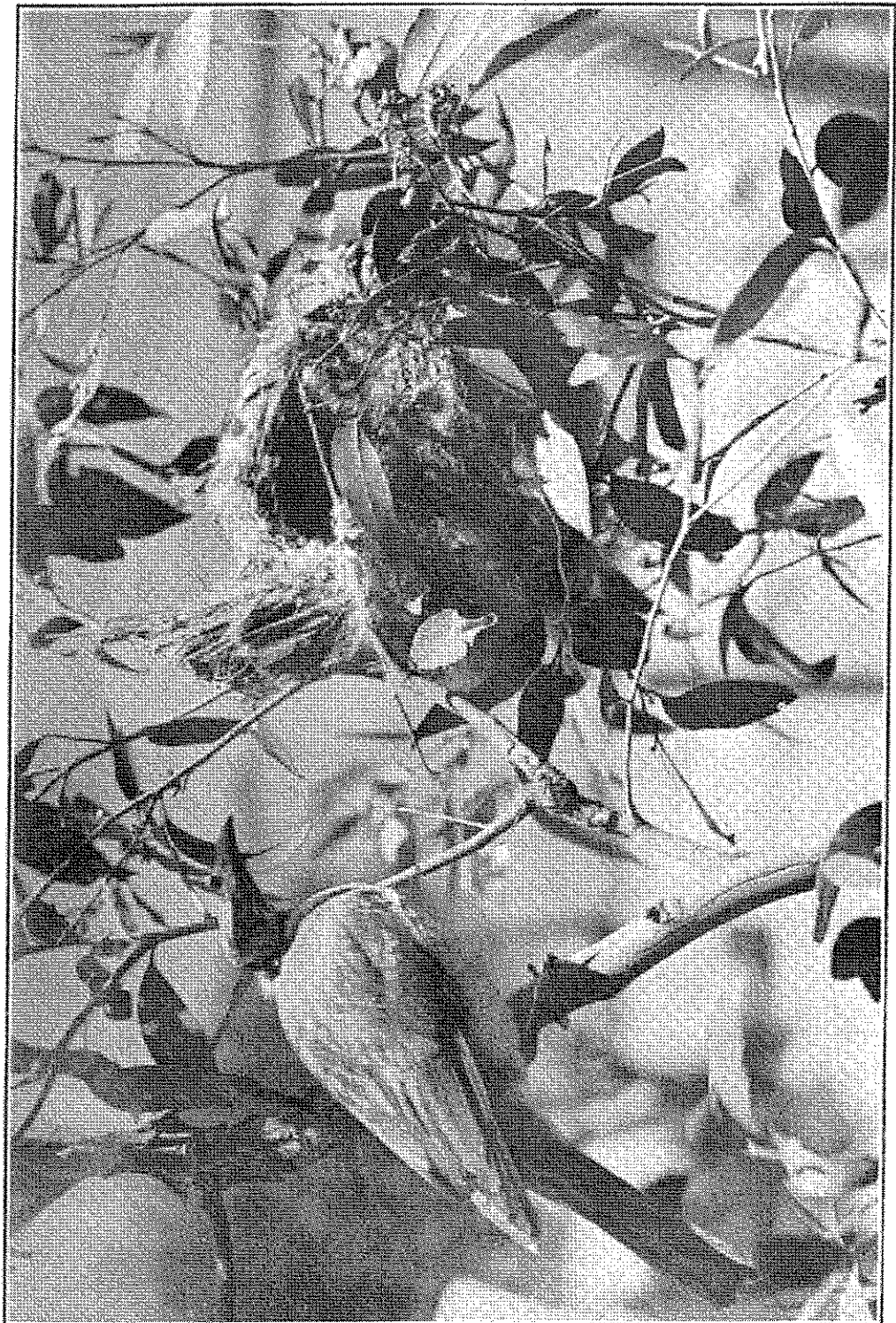


Stray Feathers and Camera Craft

What Bird Is That?—On stepping out of my hut, on the north shore of Anson's Bay, at about 6 a.m. one morning recently, when it was just breaking day, and the first Wattle-bird had made his first croak from amidst the banksias hard by, I heard what I can only call a piercing two-note whistle coming from the timber just at the rear of the hut. It sounded something like a shepherd calling his dog, and in all my years amongst bush birds in Tasmania, I have never before heard this sound. It was repeated at brief intervals, and I was so mystified that I called to my wife to come outside to me to help me "spot" the bird responsible for the sound. It was barely light enough to discern small objects at any distance, but before the whistle had ceased I caught sight of a bird sitting on a small limb about 40 feet up in a tall white gum just at the rear of the hut. I was just going in to get the glasses, when it took flight, and as it flew along the hillside across my range of vision I could get a fair idea of its outline, but was sorely puzzled as to its identity, for at the moment I just could not call to my mind any of our birds to which it bore, in outline, the least resemblance, so far, at any rate, as size was concerned. It was larger than the Butcher-bird, longer, and its flight was very direct, without any undulating movement.

About an hour later, I was standing on the bank overlooking the narrow, timber-margined beach, when I saw a very fine specimen of the Australian Ground-Thrush (*Oreocincla bunulata*) busily engaged in searching for breakfast amidst the leaf-strewn ground quite close to the beach. It did not even then occur to me that this might have been the bird I heard and saw in the dim light of dawn, but when it took flight, and passed plainly before me for about eighty yards, I became convinced that it was either the same bird or one of the same species, for the shape and flight were identical.

Since returning home here, I mentioned the matter to an old bushman, and he told me that he has often heard these birds make such a two-note whistle in the very early mornings from tea-tree scrubs close to camps he has occupied in the bush. I have known this bird well (as I thought) ever since I was a boy, but this interesting incident has plainly shown me that I did not know all about it. The late A. J. Campbell, in his great work (*Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*) throws considerable light on the vocal attributes of this bird. He says in par. 4, p. 186, part 1, in his reference to the bird's song: "... being a melodious whistle of chiefly two notes, a slide about a third from one to the other, with trills and variations.



Noisy Friar-bird and nest.

Photo. by Norman Chaffer, R.A.O.U.

Sometimes the bird sings at dawn." This note just about describes what I heard, without the "trills and variations". The italics are mine. Mr. Campbell speaks of this bird as "lovable", and I thoroughly endorse his opinion. —ROBT W. LEGGE, R.A.O.U., Cullenswood, Tas.

Photographing the Friar-bird.— One of the chief of the charms of the northern suburbs of Sydney is the abundance of native trees left around the houses. These attract a variety of native birds. One such home, in a main street in Killara, had an area of tall trees at the rear of the house, in which a pair of Friar-birds were nesting. When convinced that I had no designs on the birds or eggs, the owner of the land gladly gave me permission to observe and photograph the birds.

The "leather-heads," as they are commonly known locally, had built their nest in a small stringy-bark (*Eucalyptus*), standing out alone from the main group of trees. The nest was suspended from a horizontal branch about twenty feet from the ground, and only about six feet from the main trunk of the tree. The situation was more than usually accessible; that mostly chosen being the extremity of a thin drooping branch. The nest, the usual, somewhat-untidy, cup-shaped structure, was composed chiefly of stringy-bark, among which were woven a few odds and ends such as string. The interior was lined with rootlets and contained two eggs, salmon in colour, with dark spots.

The "leather-heads" became quite excited and flew around with loud protesting cries when I climbed the tree. They are quaint-looking, with black featherless head adorned with a knob on the bill—a veritable clown among birds. In keeping with their strange appearance they have a variety of queer notes, loud and discordant. A large amount of exertion appears to be required in uttering their loud calls, for the head is thrown suddenly forward, and the whole body vibrates. I set up my camera with some difficulty. I had to photograph against the sun, and, in addition, avoid an iron-roofed shed, that occupied a good portion of the background. The birds soon calmed down, and before long I could photograph them without moving away from the camera.

Encouraged by the trustful nature of the birds, I paid a visit to the nest on November 27, 1932—a week after photographing them—with my ciné camera. The nest then contained one young, a few days old, and the second egg had disappeared. After the first flurry the birds almost completely disregarded the sound of the ciné camera, although I stood in the tree alongside. The young bird was fed on insects, and, I believe, a little honey. The insects were mostly snapped up in mid-air, the birds displaying

great animation in capturing them. Occasionally they were secured from the leaves of the trees. The birds would twist and turn in every conceivable attitude in the search for insects, frequently hanging body downwards. Any intruding bird was pugnaciously driven off. I again visited the nest a week later, but found the young bird missing. The adults already had a second nest almost completed in an inaccessible position on the horizontal branch of a tall turpentine.—NORMAN CHAFFER, R.A.O.U., Sydney, New South Wales.

Lyrebirds Breeding Close to Sydney.—I have had the privilege of seeing some excellent photographs of the nest of the Lyrebird taken in a gully leading to Middle Harbour, Sydney, by an intending member of the R.A.O.U., Mr. E. L. Bradford. The photos. show a "close-up" of the female in the nest, and another of the nest with the egg, the latter having been only displaced a little forward for photographic purposes. Later, it is hoped to send a series if the chick is hatched, and members may look forward to some fine pictures. The locality is only six miles from the G.P.O., Sydney, and close to a thickly-populated suburb.—E. A. D'OMBRAIN, R.A.O.U., Roseville, N.S.W., 3 8 33.

Dead Fan-tailed Cuckoo in the Centre of Sydney.—Bird observation in a crowded, bustling city leaves much to be desired, though occasionally something of interest happens. Not so many years ago a bird of prey (I was unable to ascertain the species) posted itself on the parapet of a building and preyed upon the Pigeons that were wont to haunt the Lands Department edifice in Bent Street, Sydney. Public servants were noticed to pause awhile and admire the dexterity of the bird, and the matter was duly reported in the press. Quite recently (20 6 1933) a friend, who knows of my interest in birds, walked into the office and said, "There is a bird with a reddish-brown breast and a barred tail lying in the gutter in Ash Street." Ash Street is a narrow cobbled laneway in the very heart of the city. On going down to investigate I found a Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) that had been squashed flat, apparently by the wheel of a car. It could not have been dead more than an hour or so, as the blood was not then dry. How the Cuckoo came to be in such a place is somewhat of a mystery. Perhaps it was flying over the city when it struck an aerial or some such obstruction.—K. A. HINDWOOD, R.A.O.U., Willoughby, N.S.W., 25 7 33.

The Fantail-Warbler.—In the July issue of *The Emu* (Vol. XXXIII, p. 62) appears an interesting article on the "Tailor Bird", by A. H. Chisholm. The article had an especial interest for me as *Cisticola caillie* is one of the most local birds in my district. They are seen both in summer and winter in the cultivation paddocks amongst crops, or in nearby grass land. As far as I have observed, they remain near the one spot the year through. I have studied these little birds with very great interest for some years, and have seen some very beautiful nests. I have watched their building operations many a time, but have never seen them actually "sewing" the leaves together. Indeed, it would be only by chance that one would see them at work at this stage of nest building. They are most cautious when approaching the nest, and always enter the cover at least 30 feet from where they are building, and work their way quietly, but quickly, to where the work is being constructed. The cobwebs are not easy to see, but when the inner part of the nest is being made it is quite a different matter—the material then used is very easy to detect, being of a fluffy nature, and of a white colour. By watching the direction from which the birds rise when leaving the nest, even though they depart as cautiously as they come, it is not very difficult to locate the position of the nest.

From an examination of their work, it seems quite clear that the leaves are pierced by the sharp little bill and the web which is used for sewing, pushed through the opening and pressed on to the leaves, where it sticks and binds them together. I have often seen the birds working on the inner part of the nest, for which grass and fluff from plants are generally used. Some nests have been made solely of silky down from Scotch thistles and silky white cobwebs, forming a beautiful little nest inside, the outer frame being of stitched leaves. The position of the nest varies a good deal, some have been found in a tussock of grass, others among weeds, but the favoured place is in saccaline or other sorghum crops when such sites are available.

The most beautiful nest I have seen was discovered on January 30, 1932. The outer frame of this nest was composed of the growing leaves of saccaline, which were neatly sewn together with web. These formed a complete nest in shape, the long leaves, which had been bent down to form the top part of the nest, extended for 6 inches over the entrance, forming a very neat hood. Inside this frame, a wonderful inner nest or lining had been made of Scotch thistle down and cobwebs—it was a splendid piece of work, and resembled a very fine silk lace, through which the sunlight penetrated and made a very beautiful setting for the four pretty blue eggs freckled with reddish spots.

In September, the male bird develops his golden head and

neck, when he is easily distinguished from the plainer-coloured female. It is then that the birds come into full voice, and it is very pleasant to hear their cheerful calls and warbles.

Though the Fantail-Warbler is essentially a bird of the grasses and crops, at times they love to perch on the top-most branch of a tall dead tree, where they will sing their bright song for half an hour. They also enjoy flying high into the air calling in pure delight. I have watched them going upwards until out of sight, then "diving" for the crops below at wonderful speed. In April the Warblers go into their winter moult, after which both male and female are alike in colour. With the change of plumage their bright call ceases, and from then, through the winter, they only utter a little harsh scolding call, or a weak little mouse-like squeak.

All through the winter, one never sees the Fantail-Warbler out of thick cover—only occasionally does it rise to the top of a stalk of oats or other such plant, to disappear quickly at the first move of the observer. They are much more trustful in the spring, when I have often had them come to within three feet of me after insects that I had disturbed when cutting feed for my cows.—E. A. R. LORD, R.A.O.U., Murphy's Creek, Qld., 21.8.33.

Notes on the Lyrebird and the Satin Bower-bird.—Mr. Edward A. Vidler, R.A.O.U., writes with extracts from a letter received from Mrs. Margaret Harcastle, of Carney's Creek, via Boonah, Qld., concerning the Albert Lyrebird, which, she says, she has heard "imitating a rooster's crowing." When the rabbit-proof fence was being erected in the Condamine scrub the Lyrebirds would often fill in, in places, overnight, the trenches that the men had dug during the day for the wire netting, kicking back the loosely-shovelled earth. She continues, "A curious thing happened here some years ago. A Satin Bower-bird built a bower in a small quince grove right against the house. We peeped at them building and playing, and hoped to keep the bower always. To our disgust, after playing in it for about three weeks, they destroyed it leisurely, bit by bit, with as much fuss as when they had built it. At the time they were building it I found another one, in about the same stage of construction, about a mile away from the house. After the birds had destroyed the one in the quince trees, I went to look at the other one. It was demolished also."

Birds and Weather.—On a recent beautiful sunny afternoon I was watching a group of Silver Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), which were basking on the sandy shore of the Leven River, twelve miles west from Devonport. Suddenly three or four of them rose into the air, circled about up aloft, then dashed down in a headlong "dive," stopping before reaching the water. They then curved upwards for another "sail" around and headlong "dive," then rejoined the group on the shore and settled down quietly for a sun-bath. These frolics made me feel sure that a change of weather was impending, although the sky was clear and blue. The two following days were overcast and threatening, and on the third day rain began at noon, and we had a solid downpour through the evening and night—the best rain of the month, which has been unusually dry for August. It seems strange that those graceful birds could sense the disturbance so long beforehand, but there is no doubt that they did. On a previous occasion, when driving with a friend, we noticed a party of these Gulls circling high up over the Mersey estuary, and every now and again one would make a headlong swoop as if to enter the water, but on each occasion checked and curved upwards before touching the surface. The weather looked quite settled at the time, but within forty-eight hours a cyclonic disturbance came along, bringing squalls of wind and rain. The so-called "lower creatures" are far ahead of human beings in their sensitiveness to approaching atmospheric changes. —H. STUART DOVE, R.A.O.C., Devonport, Tas., 30 8 33.

Native Birds in a Suburban Garden.—In my presidential address in 1929 I mentioned the fact that quite a number of our birds which are temporarily driven away from their natural environment by the expansion of our suburban areas, in course of time, as our shrubs and plants grow up, return to their one-time old haunts. I live in one of the suburbs on the north of the city of Sydney, about six miles from the G.P.O., and in my garden, in addition to a fair-sized "turpentine" tree and a topped eucalypt, are a number of native shrubs and wild plants placed there by myself—Grevilleas, 3 sp., *Hakea eucalyptoides*, *Acacia cyanophylla*, etc. I have noted the following birds from time to time. The list (of 40 species) bears out my contention. Also I think that a list of birds seen in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens would reveal quite a large number of native residents or visitors by what I remember of them.* Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*), Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Broad-billed Roller (*Erpystomus*

*A list of birds compiled during a single morning visit to these gardens appears in Vol. XXV, p. 172. About 150 species have been recorded from the gardens. Ed.

orientalis), Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coraciina nova-hollandiae*), Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*), Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*), Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*), Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), Square-tailed Cuckoo (*C. pyrrhophanus*), Black-eared Cuckoo (*Orecharis osculans*), Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*), Restless Flycatcher (*Scisura inquieta*), Grey Fantail Flycatcher (*R. flabellifera*), Willie Wagtail (*R. leucophrys*), Jacky Winter (*Micrarchaea fascians*), Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), Golden Whistler (*P. pectoralis*), Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*), Eastern Shrike-Tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*), White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*), White-throated Warbler (*Gerygone olivacea*), Yellow Weebill (*Smicromis flavescens*), Brown Weebill (*S. brevirostris*), Variegated Wren (*Malurus lamberti*), Superb Blue Wren (*M. cyaneus*), Dusky Wood-Swallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*), Orange-winged Sittella (*Neositta chrysoptera*), Mistletoe-Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*), Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*), Striated (?) Pardalote (*Pardalotus striatus*, (?) *ornatus*), Grey-breasted Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*), Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*), Olive-backed Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*), Grey Butcher-bird (*Craicticus torquatus*), Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Meliphaga chrysops*), White-naped Honeyeater (*Melithreptus binnatus*), Brown Honeyeater (*Gliciphila indistincta*), Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*), Red-browed Finch (*Aegintha temporalis*), Painted Quail (*Turnix varia*).

In conclusion, I wish to state that, although I am not in favour of continually publishing lists of birds in well-known localities, I think it would be of interest if all who possess gardens near the cities were to list the names of their bird "suburbanites."—DR. E. A. D'OMBRAIN, R.A.O.U., Roseville, Sydney, 31 8 33.

Some Sydney Notes.—Collared Plain-Wanderer: In following up my search as to the occurrence of this bird in its old haunts each "open" season, amongst other replies, I received the following from Mr. L. M. Kirkpatrick, of Moroco West, Deniliquin, New South Wales, in a reply dated June 30, 1933. . . . "Only yesterday put up a beautiful specimen on a large plain on this property. It settled in long grass, and I was able to catch same. It was a cock bird." The bird was later liberated.

Fairy Martins in the city (Sydney) (*vide* Vol. XXXI, p. 123): Again this year a few pairs remained throughout the winter, using the eastern side of the taller buildings as a resting point, on the window ledges, etc., of which they got the rays of the rising sun.

Raptors over Sydney: Recently I saw what I take to be a Goshawk (*Astur fasciatus*), flying in a northerly direction above the city. As these Hawks breed in the sandstone gullies of the north side of the harbour, and are fairly common, I presume the identification.—DR. E. A. D'OMBRAIN, R.A.O.U., Roseville, Sydney, 31 8 33.

Pallid Cuckoos.—Wandering along the banks of the Yarra River, close to the Kew Asylum, on the afternoon of May 5, 1933, I was surprised to hear the unexpected calling of the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*). Owing to the lateness of the season this seemed to call for verification, and on closer observation I was still more surprised to count no less than fifteen of this species in about a quarter of an acre of ground. Revisiting the spot again on May 18, the birds were still in evidence, and one bird alone accounted for eleven caterpillars, which were numerous in the grass, in twenty minutes. Possibly this food supply induced them to linger so late. Apparently the cold weather we experienced near the latter part of May sent these birds northwards, as I have not observed them in the locality during the balance of the autumn and winter.—W. BURGESS, R.A.O.U., Hawthorn, Vic.

Crow or Raven.—There is a member of the genus *Corvus* in the Barlee Range. It has the habits of *C. coronoides*, and some of the habits of *C. bennettii*. The eggs are pale blue without a spot on them. The birds nest mostly in the mulga gullies away from water, yet are always about the camp during the day after scraps of meat. The young when fully fledged have dull, dark bluish-grey eyes, and the old birds white*.—ANGUS ROBINSON, R.A.O.U., Onslow, W.A., 14 6 33.

An Interesting "Stray".—During the first week in June, 1933, my sister noticed a strange bird feeding on a road about a hundred yards from the house. It flew before she approached sufficiently near to get an idea of the species. Seeing it in the same place a day or two later, when it again flew a short distance, I followed it and found that it was a Flock Pigeon (*Histiophaps histrionica*), a bird I had never seen in this locality before. Finding it feeding about the same place each day, we scattered cracked corn there. A boy working on the farm also frequently fed it. The bird became very tame. Although its flight was very powerful, none of us ever saw it fly more than a few yards; nor did we hear it utter any call. A small field adjoining the road was sown with wheat, and the Pigeon began to spend most of its time there. About the end of July it disappeared.—F. M. IRBY, R.A.O.U., Casino, N.S.W.

*Probably *C. bennettii*.—Ed.

The Bulbul.—A few years ago, the sight of a Bulbul (*Obacampson caerulea*) in the suburbs of Sydney called forth quite a batch of enquiries as to the identity of the stranger. Like many other importations, they have found the conditions so congenial that they have increased enormously. To-day it is no uncommon sight to see flocks of any number up to one hundred, during the winter months. They do not venture far into the native bush, preferring the surroundings of houses. Their natural habitat is China, India, Malaya and Mauritius.

The Bulbul is very partial to soft fruits, and has become such a pest in orchards, that it has been placed on the list of unprotected birds. During the winter large numbers congregate in an area of privet trees growing wild near my home. The berries from these are a staple item of food during the cold weather. Lantana and inkweed berries are also eaten, and the birds no doubt play a big part in spreading those pests. Insects, too, enter largely into their diet, and are mostly captured on the wing. A considerable amount of correspondence recently appeared in the Sydney press, where opinions were expressed for and against the Bulbul. Whilst many spoke of the depredations among the fruit, others drew attention to the usefulness of the birds as insect destroyers. Particular reference was made to their destruction of the vine moth caterpillar, a pest that few birds will attack.

The Bulbul is very animated and lively in disposition. The head is adorned with an erect, pointed crest, black in colour, which gives to the bird a sprightly appearance. The colours of the bird are—back, wings and tail, dark brown; head black with a conspicuous white cheek, and a reddish patch behind the eye. The under parts are white and the under tail coverts red. In keeping with its sprightly manner the bird has a rather pleasing, cheerful and lively song. I must admit that my own personal objections to the bird are only the likelihood of its displacing native birds. It is often kept in aviaries, where it thrives on a diet of boiled rice and fruit. It is, however, aggressive and pugnacious, and will sometimes kill other inmates.

I located a nest on December 4, 1932, in the grounds of my neighbour's house. It was built in a clump of bamboos about 10 feet from the ground, and contained two young and an addled egg. The nest was a shallow, open and rather untidy structure, roughly five inches in diameter, and three inches deep externally, with an egg cavity about one inch deep. It was composed of fibrous bark, shreds of fibrous banana leaves and rootlets, and lined with very fine short twigs. The egg was whitish in colour, thickly spotted with fine reddish and purple spots. The bird proved very timid and would not face the camera for hours, even though



Bulbul at nest.

Photo. by Norman Chaffer, R.A.O.U.

I ran the shutter-release thread some fifty feet away into my own yard. One bird approached late in the day, however, and two pictures were secured.—NORMAN CHAFFER, R.A.O.U., Sydney, N.S.W.

The Grey Thrush as Mimic.—One day in May a couple of years ago (1931) the loud alarm notes of a Noisy Miner (*Myzomela melanoccephala*) were heard in the homestead pines. As the Miners do not haunt this particular corner of country, I went to investigate, but no trace of a Miner could be found, the only inhabitant of the pines being a solitary Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*), which was exploring the crevices of a big limb. Whilst watching this bird it uttered the alarm note of the Miner quite a dozen times to perfection. In September of the same year the Thrush's power of mimicry was again brought under notice. From a hole in a limb of an ancient "yellow-box" issued the squealing of a "possum." A Grey Thrush that was exploring the tree paused for a moment, and then flew to the hole, and with head turned sideways in a "knowing" attitude, peered in. Again the "possum" squealed, and the Thrush, hopping away a few inches, squealed also, and then returned to the hole and peered in again. This was repeated time after time, but the squealing of the Thrush was in a slightly different key from that of the "possum."—A. E. BRIDGEWATER, R.A.O.U., Mansfield, Vic., 18 8 33.

Bell-bird Eating Caterpillars.—On June 15, 1933, I was afforded the opportunity of watching a pair of Crested Bell-birds (*Orcoicea gutturalis*) feeding on processional caterpillars. The larvae had fallen during a heavy wind from their bag shelter suspended amidst the foliage of a large Gidyea tree (*Acacia cambagei*). Grasping a live caterpillar, each bird would thrash it on a piece of sandstone, thus killing the larva. The bird would then hold the prey by one end and swing it "pendulum wise," allowing it to drag backwards and forwards across the stone, in an endeavour, I take it, to free it from spines. After several seconds of unhurried rubbing, the larva was swallowed whole. The male bird rose to a low bough to swallow each caterpillar, after which he carefully scanned his surroundings before descending again; the female remained on the ground the whole time. I spent half an hour observing the birds from a spot fifteen feet distant. Their appetites were apparently still keen when I left, though the male bird had consumed eight caterpillars in that time.—A. ROBERTSON, R.A.O.U., Ruthven, via Isisford, Qld., 21 8 33.

Chionarchus minor and Its Sub-species.—In looking through the MSS. diary of William Anderson I found the following overlooked name:—

CORNUCERA NIVEA

Generic Characters.—The bill compressed, cultrated, acuminate, with an irregular horny substance (emarginated at the upper part) covering the base. The nostrils nearly circular placed on the sides of the mandible, under the edge of the horny cere. The tongue forms half a tube and is pointed. The feet have four toes. The thighs are bare on the lower part.

Specific Characters.—The length fourteen inches, breadth from tip of wing to tip of wing, twenty-eight inches. Size of a domestic pigeon. Whole body white with an oblong, bare, rough, black space ascending obliquely from the base of the bill on each side, to above the eye. The bill is black, feet reddish, irides dull lead colour. The tail rather short with twelve or fourteen feathers of nearly an equal length. The eyelids are somewhat swelled or thick, Kerguelen Island, December, 1776.

In the *Catalogue of Birds*, Vol. XXIV., p. 712, 1892 (pref. July 10) Dr. Sharpe discusses this bird and points out that the Kerguelen Island birds are larger than those from Marion Islands, which latter locality I designate as type locality of *minor* from the original measurements. We have then three sub-species.

Chionarchus minor minor (Hartlaub), Marion Island.

Chionarchus minor crozettensis (Sharpe), Crozette Islands.

Chionarchus minor nivea (above), Kerguelen Island.

Coroncera becomes a synonym of *Chionarchus*, 1876.

Anderson also described PROCELLARIA MAXIMA.

P. maxima fusca, Rostro pedibusque subviridi. Habitat ad Tierra del Fuego et Terra Kerguelini.

Probably meant for *Macronectus giganteus* (Gm.).—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, R.A.O.U., Meadway, St. Cross, Winchester, England, July 3, 1933.

Bird Protection.—Although much has been written in *The Emu* on the subject of protection, it is obvious that a limited section only of the public can be reached by such means. The same thing applies, of course, to similar propaganda in any other journal. Birds have, in many cases, to protect themselves as it were—that is to assure protection by their actions. It is superfluous to start telling a farmer, for instance, how useful a bird is the Straw-necked Ibis; its merits are too well known to need any advertisement. Of less obvious value are many other native birds

which, though nominally on the protected list, are regarded with disfavour in certain places. It is most pleasing to record, therefore, that some of these are now receiving the protection which they deserve. I quote the following from the *Queensland Agricultural Journal* (14.33), with reference to a serious sugar-cane pest, the Greyback Cockchafer:

"Our growers would do well to cultivate a regard for the many species of birds which are helping greatly to thin the ranks of this notorious cane insect, both in its beetle and grub conditions. In these enlightened days, when entomologists are so fond of voicing the merits of biological control, we are, perhaps, inclined to dwell too much on the entomological side of the question, and not enough on the advantages to be derived from a closer study of our insect-eating birds and their habits. We must not forget that the services rendered by birds in helping to maintain what is known as the balance of nature cannot be valued too highly by the man on the land.

"Incredible as it may seem, one occasionally hears reports of the shooting of ibis and other grub-eating birds for food. Such foolish slaughter, if continued, must eventually lead to several of these feathered friends avoiding the neighbourhood of canefields and feeding elsewhere. About fifteen years ago it was not unusual to see flocks of the Straw-necked Ibis in canefields around Gordonvale and Highleigh picking up grubs behind the plough, but now only one or two specimens are noticed at work in a field, while in some localities this valuable bird has disappeared altogether. The areas proclaimed as bird sanctuaries which chiefly concern the residents in and around Cairns are:—The shires of Cairns and Barron, the Bellenden Ker Reserve, Kuranda (Mona Mona Mission), and Lake Barrine Reserve.

"Amongst the list of 123 birds which are protected during the whole of the year throughout Queensland, the following render more or less important services in our canefields:—(1) Straw-necked Ibis, (2) White Ibis, (3) Peewee or Mudlark, (4) Indian Mynah, (5) Leatherhead, (6) Laughing Jackass, (7) Figbird, (8) Blue Jay, (9) Australian Bee-eater, (10) Black-and-white Fantail, (11) Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, (12) Pallid Cuckoo."

—A. C. CAMERON, R.A.O.U., Biddeston, Queensland.

Notes on the Eastern Grass-Owl.—The rarity of this species (*Tyto longimembris*) and the paucity of information relating to its occurrence in Victoria will add considerable interest to the evidence which was recently discovered at Werribee, Victoria. The remains of a bird were found in a corner of a cultivated field, half-buried in a muddy pool, and, following the usual custom, the one presentable wing and a leg were removed from the "skeleton" for examination. Had the identity of the bird been apparent at the time, the unfortunate remains might have received more ceremonious treatment, which they certainly merited. In a process of elimination by which an attempt was made to establish its identity on the spot, many swamp birds were mentioned on account of the proximity of the locality to an extensive area of swamp-land, and also the suggestive bars and mottlings on the wing, but none could satisfy the peculiar features which the relics possessed.

However, when these clues—the size and shape of the wing, its profuse barring, the soft texture of the plumage, and the remarkable length of the tarsus, which was only semi-feathered—were arranged in an orderly fashion and systematically examined, a balanced opinion, which had Owl writ large upon it, resulted.

The locality—Werribee—suggested the Eastern Grass-Owl, probably on account of a faint recollection that G. A. Kearland had taken a bird of that species there some thirty years ago. The Eastern Grass-Owl is undeniably a rare bird, and in reviewing its status several important factors require consideration. It is understood that this Owl inhabits open grassy lands, where, in spite of its nocturnal habits, it should be more frequently met with than would its forest dwelling relations in their particular environment. Thus it follows that the species must be retreating before the advance of civilization, in so far as it has apparently failed to colonize the tracts of grass land which appeared in the wake of cultivation, and the removal of natural timber, and which would appear eminently suitable to support it. Certainly, the running of cattle on these open grasslands might tend to drive the Grass Owl away, but nevertheless the bird under notice from Werribee was found in the midst of an area of intensive cultivation, complete with a fine system of irrigation channels.

Reference to the records reveals that the Eastern Grass-Owl has apparently always been a rare bird throughout the whole of its range, which includes the whole of Australasia. Odd records from Queensland and Victoria appear in both Mathews's *Birds of Australia* and A. J. North's *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*. G. A. Kearland's Victorian record, a reference to which appears in both works cited, and which is dated July, 1909, reads as follows:—"The Grass Owl is very rare near Melbourne, but occasionally these birds may be disturbed from the grass tussocks near Beveridge. Mice overran Wallan several years ago, and the Grass Owl suddenly became common, and many were caught in rabbit traps, but disappeared when the mice did."

It has been suggested that the open and rather desolate lands on the western shores of Port Phillip Bay, beyond Geelong and in the neighbourhood of the Connemawarre swamps and lakes, might well harbour Eastern Grass-Owls, and that the birds could even nest unknown in the dense reed beds and samphire, but nevertheless it is significant that in Belcher's *Birds of Geelong* the bird is mentioned as being very rare in the district, with one doubtful first-hand record by Mr. (now Sir Charles) Belcher himself, and that in a lightly-wooded gully.

The dimensions of the Werribee bird are wing 13", tarsus 3½". North gives the wing as 12", and the tarsus as 3", while Mathews cites wing 330 mm. and tarsus 78 mm.—J. M. GRAY, R.A.O.C., Melbourne, 31 8 33.

A Falcon, a Harrier, and the Fate of a Racing Pigeon.—Early in June, 1933, a goodly portion of the quarantine reserve at North Head, Sydney, was made available to the public. Prior to its being declared a public park, the area was practically in a natural state. The few human trespassers were mostly fishermen who passed through on their way to the precipitous foreshores. For the most part the locality consists of swampy heathland and *Banksia* scrub, and twenty years ago the Ground Parrot (*Pezoparus walliens*) inhabited the low scrub-covered wastes.

Towards the end of June a friend and I visited the locality, chiefly to investigate a report concerning a supposed colony of Cormorants, of which no tangible evidence could be obtained by us. However, on our way to the area we were attracted by an unusual chattering call, and, on looking up, noticed a Black-checked Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) about to swoop towards the ground. This it did with tremendous speed, but on nearing the earth veered upwards again and then repeated the dash from the opposite direction. Always it flew at the same spot, chattering the while, apparently in rage. On looking through field glasses (we were about 70 yards away on the far side of a depression) it was noticed that every time the Falcon neared the earth the wings of a large bird would be raised and flapped as though to ward off an attack. After several minutes the Falcon desisted and flew some distance away.

When we walked across to the place a Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) rose and flew lazily away—in comparison with the flight of the Falcon its movements seemed laboured. There, on the ground, was a racing Pigeon. Its right wing was broken and the throat was torn open. Presumably the Falcon had struck down the unfortunate Pigeon only to be deprived of its meal by the marauding Harrier. Neither bird enjoyed Pigeon pie that afternoon, for during the evening it was served, suitably garnished with parsley, at a certain home not such a great distance from the scene of the original encounter. Two small mementoes of the incident, in the form of an aluminium ring and a rubber racing band, together with a note of both thanks and sympathy, were later forwarded to the Racing Pigeon Association.—K. A. HINDWOOD, R.A.O.C., Willoughby, N.S.W., 25 7 33.

Fantail Cuckoo with Red-browed Finch. On November 15, 1931, in company with my brother, I found the nest of a Red-browed Finch at Beaconsfield, Victoria. The nest was placed in a tall tea-tree bush at a height of twelve feet from the ground, and contained one egg of the Fantailed Cuckoo, together with two eggs of the foster bird. On November 29 we again visited the nest, but found that it was

deserted, although the three eggs were still there. On examination it was found that one of the eggs of the Finch was slightly fractured and the contents of the egg were blown through this small aperture. At the time of our first visit the eggs were cold, and it is more than likely that the nest was deserted at that time. A very careful examination was made but no trace of eggs having been ejected from the nest could be found. The most interesting feature about the nest was the fact that the entrance was so enlarged that I mentioned the fact to my brother before I discovered that the nest contained this most unusual combination. The indications were such as to lead me to believe that the Cuckoo actually forced the greater portion (if not all) of its body into the nest in order to deposit its egg, but of course I am unable to say definitely whether the egg was actually laid in the nest by the bird or taken there in its mouth.—N. J. FAVALORO, R.A.O.U., Mildura, Vic., 14.9.33.

Albinos.—I am making a list of albino Australian birds. So far I have culled from *The Emu* the following:—Emu (Vol. XVIII, p. 74), Jabiru (X 243), Wedge-tailed Eagle (XVI 107), Willie Wagtail (IV 169), Magpie (XVIII 74), Pipit (XXI 169), Yellow-tailed Thornbill (XXII 73) (XXVIII 130), Satin Bower-bird (XXVI 310), Crow (IV 67). There are several references to albino Parrots, but no specific Parrot is mentioned. In *The Birds of Australia*, by Lucas and Le Souëf, there is a photograph of an albino Magpie-Lark on page 340, and on page 392 one of a Noisy Miner. Does anyone know of any others?—MARC COHN, R.A.O.U., Bendigo, Vic., 31.8.33.

Editor's Note.—In A. J. Campbell's *Nest and Eggs* a reference to an albino Lyre-bird appears on page 523, and an albino Stubble Quail is pictured in North's *Nest and Eggs*, Vol. IV, p. 174. The National Museum, Melbourne, has an albino Kookaburra.

Mr. A. H. Mattingley has forwarded a copy of the leaflet signed "D. Le Souëf, Hon. Sec. Provisional Committee", sent to ornithologists in Australia immediately prior to the inception of the Union—of which leaflet very few copies are, apparently, now extant. It refers to the then recent Federation, and suggests a federal outlook on matters ornithological. An extract of a letter received from Dr. P. L. Selater is included, which reads, "I learn with pleasure that you are thinking of establishing an ornithologists' Union in Australia. I think it is a move in the right direction". Guarantees for annual subscriptions are requested—reference to proposed camps-out is made. The birds that sit on the line across the top of the leaflet are, unfortunately, of the type that still ornament Christmas cards.