

## **Miniature Cameras in Relation to Bird Photography**

By J. S. RAMSAY, R.A.O.U., Sydney, N.S.W.

A few months ago the writer had occasion to examine one of the modern miniature cameras which use cinematograph film, and was immediately struck by the fact that it embodied a movement of infinite value to bird photographers provided the instrument was capable of producing an image of high quality, and suitable for considerable enlargement. As a tentative try-out gave promise of such an image, a camera was secured, and after a few failures, an addition made which enables the worker to change the film and reset the shutter by merely pulling a string, and without in any way revisiting the camera between exposures. As the film chamber carries film sufficient for up to forty pictures, it will readily be seen what an advantage such an instrument has over other makes for the picturing of bird life.

The first opportunity of a proper test under field conditions took place at the Union's recent Camp-out at Moree, where a Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike had the honour of being the first bird to be pictured by a method which it

is safe to say will revolutionize bird photography. No more will we climb wearily to the camera and change plates, meanwhile scaring the bird away for another hour or so while the precious light fails; no more shall we watch two adult birds playing at a nest while we sit helpless with our plate exposed; no longer will the raptors be ignored simply because a whole day is too valuable to spend on the bare possibility of a single exposure. No—in future we will simply sit with a string in each hand and pull them alternately, and every second pull will mean a picture.

The writer claims pardon should his head be somewhat in the clouds, for he feels that he and brother photographers have suffered a good deal from birds in the past, and now sees some chance of turning the tables upon them. Take the accompanying picture of the Royal Spoonbill, for instance. After waiting waist deep in the swamp for four hours (while the bird, well out of focus, stood on one leg and dozed in the sun) he secured ten different pictures in almost as many seconds during her one visit to the nest. Of the Ground Cuckoo-Shrike, fifteen were taken during two or three visits is less than a quarter of an hour. Only a few exposures were made on the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike referred to, because the light was "patchy," the bird had lost some of its tail, and the subject generally did not warrant more.

In criticising these first pictures, it should be remembered that they were taken with a lens of only two inches focus and that the image of the Spoonbill on the negative measures only five sixteenths of an inch. A lens of longer focus (which can be fitted to the camera) would of course have produced considerable improvement. Even so, the negatives produce high quality whole plate prints, and lantern slides quite up to the average quarter-plate standard.

The writer does not feel that these cameras are all in all, but they do seem capable of producing bird pictures which are otherwise almost unobtainable. As additional virtues, the use of cinematograph film not only reduces the cost of upkeep to the minimum (6d. to 9d. per dozen exposures), but also provides the user with the finest negative-making material on the market.

The picture accompanying this contribution and those by the writer illustrating the Camp-out at Moree were all taken with the camera in question.



Royal Spoonbill at nest.

Photo. by J. S. Ramsay, R.A.O.U.