

Some Fairy - Martin Notes.—Although not generally regarded as a strict migrant, Fairy-Martins (*Hylochelidon ariel*) have for the last eight years always left the Shoalhaven district, New South Wales, in the early autumn, and it is not until the last week of August or the first week of September that their somewhat grating call is heard here again. Arriving from their migratory tour they quickly set about constructing their bottle-shaped nests. Mid-September usually finds a small company of them busily engaged in carrying mud from an old well to an adjacent creek bank near my home. It was at such a nesting site that I decided, last season, to try my luck with a camera. A "hide" was placed some fifteen yards from the nests and was moved closer daily until it was but three feet from the entrance to the nests. My troubles were not over, however, for, from within the "hide," I found that the birds persisted in the pretty, but from a photographer's viewpoint annoying habit of hovering a foot or so before their own particular nest, meanwhile peering intently within, as though to ascertain whether it contained any alien form, then darting straight into the entrance at such a speed that I wondered they did not injure themselves against the inner walls.

Pieces of black cloth were placed well within the nests in the hope of causing the Martins to depart from their usual custom and alight in a photographically-favourable position, but without success, for when I had retired the whole company of some twelve birds assembled and made a rather fascinating sight, as they fluttered between the "hide" and the nests.

This dainty hovering of the Fairy-Martins much resembled, I thought, the hesitating manner of the red, blue and green dragon-flies which patrolled the creek.

After much experimenting several pictures of doubtful standard were secured.

Fairy-Martins have many pleasing ways, one of which is the unusual habit of feeding their young whilst on the wing; but it is not until one has watched them from a distance of a few feet that one fully appreciates the charm of these sprites of the lower air.—ARTHUR ELLIOTT, Camberwarra, New South Wales, 14/8/34.

D. L. Serventy, a former State Secretary for Western Australia, who resigned from the Union a few years ago on his leaving the Commonwealth to continue studies abroad, has obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Cambridge University. Dr. Serventy has recently rejoined the Union.



Fairy Martins at nest.

Photo. by A. O. Elliott.