

jungle hillside and valley is being converted into a cane plantation, and the forests are being exploited for timber, the mangroves on the lonely coast-lines remain unaltered. Down towards Brisbane mangroves are fast disappearing, and mangrove life there must be affected—for example the Mangrove-Heron (*Butorides striata*) is fast becoming a rarity in the forlorn and scattered southern swamps; although in the tropics it is common, and a feature of all extensive swamps.

Stray Feathers

Return of the Swifts.—After an almost complete absence for several years, the Spine-tailed Swifts (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) have again appeared in this district of Mersey towards migrating time. A party of them was about on the Wednesday after Easter Monday, but on April 19 a much larger number was sailing about over the Don Road, and from there to Mersey Bluff, at various heights, some at a considerable altitude. They were circling and wheeling in the usual way, and were well seen against a cloudy sky. Both these parties occurred in the vicinity of disturbed weather, as is usually the case. On Easter Tuesday there had been heavy rain, and the birds were seen next day. April 18 was also very wet, as was the early morning of the day following.

The last of the Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) were seen on the afternoon of April 10, at half-past four o'clock, at a considerable height; they were moving very deliberately westwards, circling much, after the manner of Swifts, and were distinctly outlined against a dark cloud. Some years ago, a party was seen in September to arrive from the mainland in this fashion, very high up, and when they reached the coastline they descended among the trees to feed and rest.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tas., 25/4/34.

Sooty Oyster-catcher in Port Phillip Bay.—On July 29, 1934, I, and C. E. and J. J. Bryant, observed a solitary specimen of the above bird on the western shore of Port Phillip, a mile or two south of the mouth of the Little River. The bird was one of a mixed company of Silver Gulls, Crested Terns and Cormorants resting on a rocky spit, but it flew away independently of the other birds when disturbed. I believe that the occurrence of the Sooty Oyster-catcher in the Bay is rare. Belcher (*Birds of the District of Geelong*) states that he has "never seen the Sooty Oyster-catcher on this [western] side of Port Phillip."—ROD MORELL, Toorak, Victoria, 17/8/34.



Curious formation in feet of Lyrebird.

Photo. by A. J. Elliott.



Skua taking food from the hand.

Photo. by Mr. John Grimwade.

Remarkable Growth of Claws on Foot of a Lyrebird.—

Recently I had the pleasure of viewing a number of natural history exhibits and curiosities owned by Mr. E. Reid, of Bomaderry, New South Wales, and was much interested in a pair of feet of the Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novæ-hollandiæ*), which had been removed from the body of a male of the species. This bird had been shot on Cambewarra Mountain some years ago and the tail, also, was on "exhibition". One of the feet had met with an accident, apparently some years earlier, and, as a result, its owner could make no use of it; consequently the claws had grown to an enormous length. Mr. Reid willingly lent me the feet in order that I might photograph them and as the accompanying photograph shows all the details fairly plainly there is little necessity for me to describe them in detail. However, the feet were old and had never been properly preserved, with the result that they were in a deteriorated condition. It seemed as though the injured foot had been broken at the junction of the toes with the leg, and, that, after this, the bird had been unable to make any use of it. Naturally this would be a great affliction to a bird such as the Lyrebird, which secures its food by scratching. The leg was much shrunk and its muscles appeared to be either poorly developed or to have wasted away. One claw was much longer than the others and, even then, it appeared as if the end had once been broken off it. This claw had separated from the toe and had been tied on with raffia, but I removed this before taking the photograph, and placed the claw in what I took to be the normal position.

I think it very probable that the bird had had its foot broken by having it caught in the jaws of a steel rabbit trap, for I have known instances where Lyrebirds have been caught in these devices in this locality. The traps are, of course, set for rabbits, and are neatly covered with earth by the trapper. When a number are set in areas inhabited by Lyrebirds it is scarcely to be wondered at that one of these birds will sometimes walk, or attempt to scratch on one.—A. J. ELLIOTT, Cambewarra, N.S.W.

The lower illustration on the opposite page is reproduced from a photograph by Mr. John Grimwade. It represents Captain Darroch, of the motor vessel *Westralia*, feeding a Skua at Albany, W.A., September, 1933. From the size of the bird and the amount of white in the wings the bird would appear to be referable to the genus *Catharacta*.

For Sale, Mathews's *Birds of Australia*. Two complete sets in parts are on offer. Apply Hon. General Secretary.

Unusual Nesting Sites.—In the July (1933) issue of *The Emu*, Mr. Cohn lists many unusual nesting places of birds which had been recorded from time to time in various contributions to *The Emu*. Although it is more than a year since his notes appeared the following further instances that have come under my notice may prove interesting.

In the Midlands, Cleveland District, Tasmania, I found the used nest of a Grey Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*) built in an old bucket which had been placed sideways in a *Banksia* tree. The bucket was hidden in the tree by a sheep farmer who used it to draw water from a well when the other water holes were dry in summer.

When living at Boat Harbour, North-West Coast, I discovered a nest of the foregoing species made in the centre of a fern right on the top of the growing, folded-over fronds. I took a photograph of the eggs, but later the nest was destroyed by a water rat or some other enemy.

In the same district I was shown the nest of a ringtail 'possum, built in one of a willow group standing in the Flowerdale River. In this a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) had laid a clutch of eggs and hatched them successfully, leaving only tiny egg-shell fragments in her strange nest.

When staying at The Steppes, some years ago, I was shown a swamp gum (*Eucalyptus regnans*), the trunk of which branched into three main stems at a distance of about twelve feet from the ground. In the level space between these branches a Black Duck had made her nest and successfully hatched a clutch of eggs, nine if I remember correctly. Later my friends came upon the family making its way to the lagoon and found the parents in great tribulation over their inability to get their ducklings through the mesh of the rabbit-proof fence. However, human hands soon lifted the toddlers on to the right side for the lagoon.

At Barnbougle, several miles from Bridport, a pair of Scarlet-breasted Robins (*Petroica multicolor*) made a nest in the blind end of a length of spouting running along the wall of the dwelling house. I took a photograph showing both male and female feeding their offspring.

When living at Boat Harbour School I was weeding a bed of Canterbury Bells one evening and was amazed to find in it a nest of *Malurus cyaneus* containing nearly-fledged young. I noticed the birds were always about but never thought they would build where sixty to seventy children raced around.

On several occasions during my wanderings through the bush I have come across nests of the *Acanthiza pusilla* built in a hole in the ground, such as an extra deep hoof

depression, generally where a tuft of grass or tiny shrub provided a little shelter. Like those of the Field-Wren (*Calamanthus*) the bottom lips of these nests were level with the ground, but the frame-work was not attached to any support as is general with the genus *Acanthiza*.

At Eaglehawk Neck I was asked to identify the owner of a cup-shaped nest built in a large cabbage. The nest which contained fledged young had been found by the householder one morning when she went to cut a cabbage for dinner. From the description given I concluded the nest's builder to be the White-bearded or Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*). The flitting of the frightened young prevented a photograph of the nest's unique position and when I asked for the cabbage containing the nest *in situ* it had been thrown to the pigs.

In my own garden at Eaglehawk Neck a Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*) reared a clutch in a nest built in a fuchsia growing beside a pelargonium bush. Three seasons ago a Dusky Robin (*Amaurodryas vittata*) made its nest on top of a pole, under 6 feet high, in a bush house, not more than eight feet away from the wash-house. A Grey Butcher-bird (*Cracticus torquatus*) took the young, I always frighten these latter birds away, otherwise the smaller birds soon leave. However, a neighbour a few chains away feeds them, with the result that no small birds frequent that garden, except Honeyeaters when the tree lucerne is in flower. The second result is that broods near my place suffer.

A pair of Scrub-Wrens (*Sericornis humilis*) took possession of a hanging basket in which were growing ferns and one of the native lobelias, and made their nest in the midst of its thickest portions. The basket was hung from the roof of a creeper-curtained verandah and the homestead was close to the forest. Locality, The Steppes, Tasmania.

In Diprose's Lagoon, Midlands, we found the nest of a Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*) containing two eggs, and built on top of it was the nest of a Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*).—J. A. FLETCHER, Forcett, Tasmania, 1/8/34.

Call of the Olive Whistler.—Yesterday (July 24, 1934), when in a thicket of scrub near Devonport, an Olive Whistler (*Pachycephala olivacea*) began calling, and continued to approach until within five or six yards of me. The call was somewhat different from that usually heard; the first two notes were loud and clear, but in the third the bird dropped down suddenly to a very soft and low whistle, which sounded at least thirty yards away—a remarkable ventriloquial effect. Exactly the same call was repeated again and again, the effect being quite charming. It

reminded me a little of the call of the Eastern Whip-bird, when the male is using the loud whip-crack, and the soft response of the female follows instantly.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tasmania, 25/7/34.

The New Zealand Black Fantail.—In view of the fact that the Black Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) is said by Oliver (*New Zealand Birds*) to be a melanistic mutant of the Pied Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*) the following note is possibly of value. In September, 1933, a pair of Black Fantails built a nest in the fork of a low branch of a tall fir tree, about 20 feet from the ground. Therein they hatched out two nestlings, and when fledged one was totally black and the other was a typical Pied Fantail.—PERRINE MONCRIEFF, Nelson, New Zealand.

A Rare Book—Lewin's "Birds of New Holland," 1808.—In *The Emu* of April, 1934, Vol. xxxiii, page 273, my friend Tom Iredale published some notes of birds dealt with by Thomas Skottowe early in last century. He then says how rare is Lewin, 1808, only one known copy being in Australia—in the Yorkgate Library, Adelaide. I always thought that there was one in Melbourne. It appears to be an extraordinarily rare book; I had to wait a quarter of a century for my copy. The only copies known to me in England are two in the British Museum and my own. All the copies are cut down except my own, which was bought from the famous Holford Library, in Dorchester House, Park Lane, London, and is in perfect condition just as it was issued in boards, uncut. Further I have three original drawings by Lewin, signed by him, and dated 1800, and these are truly excellently done; they depict the Short-billed Tit, Scarlet-breasted Robin, and the Spotted-sided Finch.

This John William Lewin is not the brother of William, as stated in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but is probably a son—so Francis Edwards thinks. He was born in 1770 (?) and arrived in New South Wales in 1798. Can any member tell us of earlier signed paintings of birds done in Australia?

In *The Emu*, Vol. XV, Part 1, I published the details of the 1813 edition, the only one published in Sydney, and the first work on natural history produced in Australia.—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Meadway, St. Cross, Winchester, England, 26/5/34.

Lewisham (Forcett) Notes.—A flock of *Platycercus eximius* has roosted for two winters in the pines bordering the school ground. They keep to two of the tallest and thickest trees. It is a beautiful sight to see a bird on each tip of a pine branch, especially when it faces the west and the bright plumage is illumined by the sinking sun. The

clock could almost be set by their punctuality. The main members arrive at 4.30 p.m., but belated couples fly hurriedly up during the succeeding half-hour. Some of the Parrots fly down to the drill ground and pick up grit, spending about ten minutes doing so. My sister used to scatter oats for them but a motorist "dumped" some unwanted cats nearby, and whilst they were about the oats were withheld so as not to encourage the Parrots, for the cats even mounted the pines after the birds. Last year must have been a favourable one for the Parrots. I heard of numerous nests with clutches of six young. I heard also of many clutches of the Owlet Nightjar (*Egotheles cristata*).

A Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) nested nearby, and brought out her brood. A curious feature with the Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novæ-hollandiæ*) about here is that they prefer the summits of the hills or rises for nesting. In other places where I have been amongst them the nests were made on the flats. Two clutches of five eggs were reported last season—one had the bird sitting, the other pair had the young birds following them. Three pairs of Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) nested amiably in separate pine trees within twenty feet of each other. These birds have frequented the school area for some time. They feed in harmony with a pair of Butcher-birds (*Cracticus torquatus*) and the Miners (*Myzantha melanoccephala*), from the food trays erected on the swing tops. None of the smaller birds comes near the grounds whilst the foregoing are feeding, however. On July 29 this year I found the Butcher-birds with a nest partly built. Another has been reported by the scholars, also a Magpie's. In November, 1933, a Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*) was seen with its chicks on the muddy edge of the small lagoon.—J. A. FLETCHER, Forcett, Tasmania, 1/8/34.

Hedge-Sparrow's Unusual Nest.—Last season at Astrolabe Roadstead (a series of small bays about forty miles from the City of Nelson), I came across an unusual nest of the Hedge-Sparrow. It was wedged securely between a Rata Vine (*Metrosideros hypericifolia*) and its host, a large Tree-fern, being about ten feet from the ground. The birds had chosen a site close to a path cut through dense undergrowth leading from the beach up to a cottage. The materials they used were varied, but consisted chiefly of moss held in place by an outer circle of small twigs. It was mixed with soft, dark-brown material obtained from the trunks of large Tree-ferns and held together by minute twigs and stems of plants.

The cup of the nest was very softly lined with dry grass, hair and the fluff, wool, and other materials which together

form the matted contents ejected from a carpet-sweeper. The birds must have visited the dust-heap outside the back door to obtain this unusual, but quite suitable material. It will therefore be seen that the introduced Hedge-Sparrow, which, like the domestic Sparrow, fears not to enter the wilds following on the footsteps of Man, had made its nest of two classes of material—that which it could obtain from the natural surroundings and that obtained by fossicking around the dwellings of human beings.

There was, however, another peculiarity about the nest. The inside was neatly divided into two compartments by a division made of a wall of the matted material obtained from the carpet-sweeper. The nest, therefore, appeared to have two small holes in it, which, when carefully examined, proved to be two separate compartments in each of which lay the fragments of tiny blue eggs, showing that the nestlings had emerged safely.—PERRINE MONCRIEFF, Nelson, New Zealand.

Koolides.—Mr. Marc Cohn writes, in the last number of *The Emu*, of a lady who mentioned that many years ago in the Port Lincoln district of South Australia there were some “small grey Kingfishers with long bills,” and that they were known locally as “Koolides.” Mr. Cohn suggests that the name may have been given to the Rock Parrot, probably through Skottowe’s mention of “Koolide” as a nickname of the Rose Hill Parrot. Having spent many years on the west side of Port Augusta, I can throw some light on the Port Lincoln “Koolide.” The Grey or Collared Butcher-bird (*Cracticus torquatus*) is frequently called the “Coolady”: this bird could easily be called a “grey Kingfisher with a long bill.” I have on occasion seen “Coolady” spelt “Coolidie,” and I have no doubt that Mr. Cohn’s friend knew the Grey Butcher-bird as such.

The “Coolady” is a splendid talker and whistler when kept in captivity, and I am inclined to think that Skottowe has in error fastened “Koolide” on to the Rosella Parrots, through having heard the name when inspecting some cage birds. Early settlers did not know the “Coolady” by the name of Butcher-bird, but as the bird becomes remarkably tame about homesteads, many of them were kept as pets.—J. NEIL MCGILP, Adelaide, South Australia, 16/7/34.

Koolides.—Since my notes of these birds appeared in *The Emu* (Vol. XXXIV, p. 66), I have received a letter from Mr. J. D. Somerville, a South Australian member of the Union, telling me that he was on Eyre Peninsula at various times between 1906 and 1922 and that the Butcher-birds (*Cracticus*) were always called “Koolides” by him and his friends. Mr. Somerville was kind enough to write to half

a dozen of his friends and send their replies to me. They all emphatically declare that the Butcher-birds, not the Rock Parrots, were the "Koolides." One correspondent writes that in Queensland, also, the Butcher-birds were called "Koolides."

At Lock, Eyre Peninsula, a farm is called "Koolidie Park" after these birds.—MARC COHN, Bendigo, Vic., 29/8/34.

Sunspots and Migration.—A friend who corresponds with scientists in Canada has sent me a pamphlet, "On Arrival of Birds in Relation to Sunspots," by Ralph E. de Lury, Assistant Director of the Dominion Observatory, Ottawa. The writer refers to the splendid series of records kept by Dr. Victor Chandon and his descendants at Montdidier, France—an unbroken series of the arrival of the Cuckoo, Lark (species not stated, but presumably migratory) and Swallow, from 1784 to 1869. Notes on the atmospheric pressure, amount of rainfall and number of days of rain, hail, snow and thunder were included in the series. De Lury has taken the trouble to tabulate the results in order to compare them with the sunspot cycle of 11.5 years, maximum to maximum, and finds that the Cuckoo shows very definite relationship to the cycle, the Lark in a lesser degree, and the Swallow least of all. When the sunspot maximum, with heavy rainfall, coincided with the March-April period of spring-arrivals, the Cuckoo averaged 9 days later, the Lark 3 days, the Swallow 1 day later, than when the minimum sunspot date fell in the spring-arrival months, and brought less rain and finer weather.

It would be interesting to follow up this line of inquiry in relation to our own migrants; at present we are in a minimum sunspot period, with much under the average winter rainfall up to the beginning of September. The Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) came at about the usual date (August 26), but no Pipits (*Anthus australis*) have so far been seen about the roadsides or in paddocks, nor have I heard the call of any of the Cuckoos, not even the pleasant ripple of the Fantailed species (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), which is usually one of our early spring sounds. As far as can be judged by a single season, therefore, it looks as though the sunspot minimum with drier weather was unfavourable to the early arrival of migrants in Tasmania. I hope to make notes on this subject in future seasons.

De Lury makes the interesting statement that the vast migrations of the Pallas Sand-Grouse (*Syrroptes paradoxus*) occur in 11-year periods, being greater as a rule in alternate periods.—H. STUART DOVE, Davenport, Tas., 5/9/34.

An Item of Nomenclature.—While walking along the Don River (Tasmania) on June 17, I saw a couple of urchins with a white terrier, hunting in a large patch of half-burnt blackberries. I asked them if they had a rabbit cornered in the bushes. The elder boy said: "No, a guttersnipe!" On my asking "What's that?", he said, "There it goes," and I saw a bird with brownish back running quickly under the tangled stems to thicker cover. It was not a Quail; from the brief glimpse afforded, I believe it to have been a Spotless Crake (*Porzana plumbea*). The boys did not capture it; but what struck me was the name they bestowed upon it. It appeared a not inappropriate name for a species the favourite haunts of which are the moist margins of ponds and streams.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tasmania, 25/7/34.

Correspondence

To the Editor.

Sir,—In connection with the changing of the hue in the comb of the Lotus-bird (*Irrediparra gallinacea*) and the criticism by Mr. K. Hindwood (*The Emu*, July, 1934) of the statements made by Mr. J. Potter (*The Emu*, April, 1934), it appears to me that undue importance is being attached to this phenomenon, considering how fairly frequently it is seen in Nature. The suggestions of Mr. Potter are put forward as *theories*, such as anyone is entitled to advance—witness Mr. Hindwood's sun-light theory—not as indisputable reasons for the colour change.

Whatever the reason may be, one thing is beyond argument, and that is, the change is due to vaso-motor action. For the benefit of any who may not know what is meant by such action, I may state that the dilation and contraction of the arteries—hence redness and pallor respectively—are controlled by what may be called the "second nervous system," the centre for which is the solar plexus, which in turn is controlled by the "feelings." This constitutes the delicate "sympathetic nervous system," branches of which supply the muscular walls of the vessels. Evidence of its action may be seen in human beings when the emotions (which govern the centre) are stirred, causing pallor of the face in times of peril, fear, etc., flushing (or blushing) as a tell-tale signal in prevarication, or on harmless accusation, affection, etc., e.g. "the tell-tale flush" (romantic emotion). There are some who can "turn on" this romance at will, but not the pallor. Some can *prevent* both by exercising great will-power in suppression, but on the whole,