

be moistened regularly, otherwise they fail to hatch, and if the vegetation in the mound has been insufficiently moistened in the early part of the season, the death of the partly-developed chicks may thus be explained.

The information already obtained on this subject is so interesting that I hope to continue the work during other and more favourable seasons.

1939 Congress and Camp

As announced in the last issue, the Congress and Camp-out for 1939 have been fixed for Leeton, in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, N.S.W., in September. Further details of the arrangements are now to hand.

This year the Congress and the Camp-out will be held in conjunction in order to give visitors full advantage of the week which is being devoted to the fixtures, and enable them to spend the whole time in camp. Members and visitors will go into camp on Saturday, September 16, and have the whole of the next day free to become acquainted with the local birds. The sittings of the Congress will begin on Monday, September 18, at the Hotel Hydro, Leeton. Members will be transported to and from the hotel by car. As the whole of the time will be spent under canvas, it will not be necessary to book accommodation at the hotel.

Given favourable weather, the camp should prove most interesting to those who have not been to the irrigation area before. A site has been selected on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, between Leeton and Narrandera, and about 12 miles by road from Leeton. There will be facilities for swimming and boating. The country in the vicinity is heavily timbered with river red gum, box, undergrowth and "suckers"; on the high ground there are pines, belar and other classes of timber. There are lagoons, sunken creeks and billabongs from the river all through the country, which form nesting places for ducks and other water birds. The timber also contains many forms of birds. This applies especially to the Murray pine forests, which support Honey-eaters, Babblers, Apostle-birds, Choughs and other birds in great abundance. Trips will be arranged to points of interest in the area.

Members going to Leeton by car will take the all-weather road from Leeton to Narrandera, and some miles out will turn down a by-road to the river. A notice will be erected at the turn-off, giving directions how to reach the camp.

A cook will be engaged, tents will be erected for those requiring them, and all members will share equally in the cost, which, on present estimates, should not exceed about £2 for the week. Present indications are that there will

be a number attending the camp from Sydney and several from New South Wales country districts and from Victoria. There are some twenty members of the Riverina sub-branch of the Union who also will be present. It is hoped that members in other States will make a special effort to be present. Branch secretaries are requested to prepare their annual reports for presentation to the Congress, and arrange for papers to be read during the sittings.

Those who intend to be present should notify, at once, the chairman of the Riverina sub-branch, Mr. R. Lindsay Black, Box 10, Leeton; or the N.S.W. State Secretary, Mr. R. P. Cooper, Bull's Chambers, Martin Place, Sydney. Members are requested to intimate whether or not camping gear and/or tents will be required.

Stray Feathers

Birds and Beekeepers.—The following letters, extracted from *The Australian Beekeeper*, illustrate a difficult phase of bird protection, and seem to suggest that the commercial interest will prove an insurmountable barrier in achieving protection for a good many species of birds.

The spread of the mistletoe pest and methods of controlling it are the subject of a letter published in the issue of February 15, 1939, which prescribes wholesale destruction of Mistletoe-birds. The letter is headed "Mistletoe Bird is Spreading the Mistletoe Pest."

. . . The mistletoe is becoming more prevalent every year, and also spreading over clean country. It would take years to treat and lop the affected trees even if we could prevent the cause. I have made a thorough study of mistletoe growths and how it is spread, as for years I was cutting off and pulling down hundreds of mistletoes, but all in vain. I discovered a species of bird could graft the seed on, quicker than I could cut them off.

I have cut twenty-six mistletoe growths off only a fair-sized (Mugga) Red Ironbark tree. I decided after some years of cutting off and pulling down to make war on the birds that were responsible, but have found them a tougher problem than I expected, for I never guessed they were so numerous. I have destroyed well over twelve hundred of these birds during the last six years, nearly all on my own property, and still there are a few coming in from other parts. I was told quite recently by a beekeeper that he had quite a lot of mistletoes but no birds. I would like to have a look at this place when the berries are ripe; I think I would find a few.

This mistletoe bird is very small, somewhat like a robin with blue-black back and red thorax, describes the cock bird. It lives almost entirely on the mistletoe berries. In caging this bird I was unable to substitute anything else for its diet, and it thrives on these berries. I have had the berries germinate on the perch in the cage. Without this bird we could, I believe, by systematic lopping clean up most of our mistletoe. They go all day from tree to tree, sowing the seeds unconsciously perhaps, visiting hundreds of trees in a day. I noticed about the nesting places of these birds trees often become riddled with mistletoes. They often nest more than once in a season