

birds and many other species of nectar-eating birds, feeding on a sugary scale which infested the leaves of the round-leaved box trees. From that it would appear that the general movement during winter is in a northerly direction.

I have not been able to ascertain whether the birds remained on the Dawson during the winter months. While I was there they showed no inclination to move farther north.

Vocal Mimicry of the Brown Thornbill.—On several occasions observers have recorded the powers of mimicry which these birds use when alarmed or excited by the presence of a person near a nest containing young (*vide*, for example, Hindwood, *Emu*, vol. xxxii, p. 299). I, too, have noticed this habit on various occasions, but, until recently, thought that the birds would exercise it only when they had young in the nest and were excited in some way.

On March 25, 1940, while rambling in the bush near Talbingo, N.S.W., I heard a quiet "whisper-song" somewhat similar to that of a Silvereye. A few moments later the singer, a Brown Thornbill, was located in a tree about ten or twelve feet from the ground, and about twenty feet away. I watched it for about ten minutes without moving any closer, and, during that time, it imitated the piping call of the Yellow Robin and the trill of the Blue Wren. The mimicry was practically continuous, there being only one or two momentary breaks while the bird stopped to catch several insects. The two calls were the only notes uttered. The bird did not appear at all agitated or excited and seemed quite oblivious to my presence. The mimicry was not the result of my approaching (and thus exciting the bird) but rather the reverse, for I first heard it while still some distance away, and well out of sight of the tree in which the bird was singing.

Whilst I do not think that the Brown Thornbill can be classed as a regular mimic such as, say, the "Heath-Wren" (*Hylacola pyrrhopygia*) or the Silvereye, there apparently are occasions, quite apart from those associated with the safety of its young, when it will imitate other bird calls out of sheer enjoyment, and not as the result of some emotional stress.—J. WATERHOUSE, Albury, N.S.W., 4/7/40.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This contribution, received before publication of the August, 1940, *Emu*, is interesting, in its reference to birds mimicking under emotional stress. A. H. Chisholm (vol. XL, p. 120) discounts N. H. E. McDonald's claim that birds become "excited and voluble" (vol. xxxix, p. 300—not p. 298) during mimicry. Excitement such as that instanced by J. Waterhouse and K. A. Hindwood, provoked by fear or alarm, is, of course, distinct from that which is a mere incident of the mimicry, but there is possibly sufficient connection to justify a suggestion of relationship.