

to mean 'I evoke life') was an egg-hatching apparatus invented by W. Bucknell, who wrote a treatise on it about 1839. In the *Athenaeum* of April 18, 1840, it is advertised that the Eccaleobion, hatching birds by steam, "is now open at 121, Pall Mall, London.—Admission 1s." Timbs' *Year Book of Facts*, 1840, p. 177, also described the apparatus.

However, the idea of the incubator is of great antiquity, since in the account of the Voyages and Travels of Sir John Maundeville, between 1322 and 1356, we read:

"At Cairo they sell commonly in the market, as we do beasts, both men and women of a different religion. And there is a common house in that city, which is all full of small furnaces, to which the townswomen bring their eggs of hens, geese, and ducks, to be put into the furnaces; and they that keep that house cover them with horse-dung, without hen, goose or duck, or any other fowl, and at the end of three weeks or a month they come again and take their chickens, and nourish them and bring them forth, so that all the country is full of them. And this they do there both winter and summer."

### Stray Feathers

#### Occurrence of *Hirundapus caudacutus* in Nelson Province.

—On November 29, 1942, Mr. McKinna secured a specimen of the above interesting migrant at Stoke, in the vicinity of Nelson. The bird, a female, was very thin but otherwise in beautiful condition. When found it was still alive but died almost immediately and was presented to the Nelson Museum.

Following on a report in the newspaper of the appearance of this bird, another record was forwarded by Mr. A. J. Riordan of Pakawau. He stated: "On the 1st inst. [December] a flock of these birds circled over my property for some considerable time. Next day these birds were located in a bush-gully at the back of our house. The birds are very swift in flight and often dive at great speed."

This evidence would suggest that the birds, travelling before strong westerly winds, were driven to the head of Nelson Bay, and thence travelled in a westerly direction to Pakawau. Or they may have separated into small parties on striking land. The occurrence of a dead bird found at Hokitika and forwarded to the Canterbury Museum would confirm the latter theory.—PERRINE MONCRIEFF, Nelson, N.Z., 8/1/43.

**Bird Queries.**—I was interested in Mr. Noel Roberts's query under the heading of 'Choosing the Nest Site' in *The Emu*, vol. XLI, page 162. I would think that it would be a mutual decision, although most birds and some other animals seem probably subject to different 'temperaments.'

There are many strange fixed happenings that are unaccountable and are always subject to question. Why, for example, do Magpie-Larks and Wagtails so often build in the one tree? Possibly there is mutual protection for both in the giving of an alarm at the approach of an enemy. And why do birds often build a nest to completion and then suddenly leave it and choose another site and devote the same energy in building a second nest? I saw this some time ago on a station near Coolah, N.S.W., with a pair of Magpie-Larks. They built a nest on a limb of an *Angophora* tree and after completing it they suddenly left it and built another in an adjoining tree, but higher up. Why did they abandon the first site? It must have been a mutual decision.

How do birds that build nests of sticks get the first one or two to 'stay put'? Do they work together in the initial foundation? Such nests usually provide firm resistance to forced removal. After the first stages the building appears comparatively easy. I refer particularly to the nests of the Magpie, Butcher-bird, Crow and White-faced Heron. Take, also, the nests of the pigeon group. They are loosely constructed and yet they remain against the sway of strong winds. I have seen a Wonga Pigeon sitting on its nest with one leg protruding through, but when it was flushed the two eggs remained undisturbed.

I have always been interested in the Rooks in England, which build community nests, all in one tree. If one pair should build in a position which to the minds of the others (I assume this) appears unsafe, there is a general melee and they promptly pull it down, regardless of protest.

Birds use material according to circumstances. Some members of the kingfisher family uses termites' nests by making tunnels, but where these are not found up in the trees they use suitable spouts. The crow family here uses sticks found on the ground but in England, where sticks are scarce, you see them pulling and twisting at and finally breaking off small branches which are used in the construction of their nests. I have also seen Wood-Pigeons do the same in the parks of London.

I am glad to say that, thanks to the Gould League and other bodies, there are now more bird observers and a more general appreciation of the value of birds to the man on the land.—A. PERCY KEMP, Sydney, N.S.W., 18/11/42.

**Different Cuckoo Eggs in same Nest.**—During December, 1941, I found, in the Glen Waverley district, Vic., a nest of the Buff-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza reguloides*) which contained one egg of the Thornbill, one of the Bronze-Cuckoo and one of the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo. I should have liked to have seen what happened as between the two cuckoos, but, unfortunately, the Christmas holidays inter-

vened. When next I visited the area the nest had disappeared. Whether or not a young cuckoo was reared I do not know.

Early in November, 1942, my nephew, Owen Lawrence, discovered the nest of a Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*) within 200 yards of the same spot. It contained one egg. The following week there were four eggs and I was sure, having felt in the nest, that one belonged to a cuckoo. On a subsequent visit I found the nest deserted and after a lapse of a further two weeks I removed and opened it. It contained two eggs of the Thornbill, one of the Bronze-Cuckoo and one of the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo. Over a number of years I have examined hundreds of nests containing eggs of cuckoos and it is strange to have happened across two such clutches within a year and in the same area.—R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, Melbourne, Vic., 19/12/42.

**Fantailed Cuckoos.**—A small number of Bronze-Cuckoos and Fantail Cuckoos remain with us here in southern Victoria throughout the winter months, although usually then silent. Occasionally the calls may be heard, but it is unusual to hear them calling consistently in the winter. While at Mentone, a seaside resort about 13 miles from Melbourne, during a period extending from March to July of 1942, I had under observation a pair of Fantailed Cuckoos. The birds were first noted about early in March and were seen several times during March and April but were not heard calling. The first date that I heard their familiar trilling call was on May 9. I heard them later on May 18, 25 and 28. It rained heavily all day long on two of those days. On thirteen days in June the birds were heard calling. One of them was the coldest of the season, several were wet and others were very foggy. The birds were heard on July 1 and from July 6 until the end of the month their calling was heard on all but one day. The birds were together on nearly all occasions, one bird calling with a strong trill, and the other with a rather tremulous call.—ROY WHEELER, Elwood, Vic., 14/11/42.

**Bilateral Ovaries in Australian Hawks.**—There are few, if any, records of the occurrence of double ovaries in Australian diurnal birds of prey. A single female Collared Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*) with bilateral ovaries has come to my notice from the Mount Mary Plains, South Australia. A. L. Rand (*Auk*, 52, pp. 329-330, 1935) and Tsen-Hwang Shaw (*Nature*, 142, p. 1079, 1938) have noted bilateral ovaries in extra-limital species.

It would be interesting to know of any unpublished records of functional right ovaries in Australian hawks.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 13/2/43.

**Unusual Nest of King Quails.**—During last November a nest constructed of dried grasses and built within the confined space of a half-open rusty jam tin was sent to me. The tin measured four and a half inches in length and three and a quarter inches in diameter, whilst the aperture at the opened end measured two inches by two and a half inches. The opening would be large enough for a bird the size of a Starling to enter through. In the nest was one fertile egg, one dead featherless young bird, which unfortunately was not kept, and the remains of a broken egg. The nest was accidentally found in a rubbish tip on the edge of a mangrove swamp in the vicinity of the suburb of Concord, N.S.W.

Both nest and egg were exhibited at the December meeting of the R.A.O.U., Sydney, and the egg, which is of an olive green colour, speckled freely with minute reddish brown markings and measuring one inch in length, was identified as being that of the King Quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis*.) Previous to this I did not know that the King Quail was to be seen at Concord as it is a fairly well settled suburban area.

I would be interested to learn if any other naturalists have known the King Quail to seek such an unorthodox place in which to shelter its nest.—LAWRENCE C. HAINES, Haberfield, Sydney, N.S.W., 4/2/43.

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## Reviews

**Birds and Books.**—The relative merits of autobiography and biography might provide scope for argument, but the personal incidents associated with the acquisition of a great library and the publication of a great work are definitely matters for the former. Reviewing from the strictly-ornithological viewpoint, one tends to refer but generally to 'domestic' matters in Gregory Mathews' booklet *Birds and Books* (Verity Hewitt Bookshop, Canberra, 1942), and to pass quickly over matters of family and historical interest, and even the author's early life in Australia—droving, mining, blackfellows and the bush and its life. And the 'New Life' in England—hunting, touring and associations with the celebrities of the scientific world—this is but the 'lead-up' to the main theme.

In the chapters dealing with 'Bird Collections' and 'The Library' is a concise résumé of the author's labours in the dual task that he assigned unto himself. One would wish for more stories of rare books discovered by chance or 'pursued' with zeal and patience until a library was built that, reposing here, as it now does, may direct the researches of scientists to Australia, particularly in view of the widespread destruction in Europe, with a corresponding increase in the importance of our centres.

The acquisition of the skin collection—the largest and most representative, it is claimed, ever amassed—involved trips to every part of Australia and introduces a band of well-known bird-men—Rogers, Kemp, McLennan, Carter and others.

Prior to the appearance of the *Birds of Australia*, Dresser's *Birds of Europe* was the largest faunal work extant. But that work became