

probably completed in seven days or even fewer. In addition, the times between the completion of the nest and egg-laying were:

Nest A—Between 27 and 34 days.

Nest B—Approximately 35 days.

Nest C—10 days.

No abnormal weather conditions existed prior to or during the period of observation.

Similar information to the foregoing data, especially that relating to delay in egg-laying after the completion of the nest, would be very useful for comparison.—S. G. LANE, Lane Cove, N.S.W., 24/4/56.

## Reviews

**Western Australian Ornithology.**—A detailed account of the nesting habits of the Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*) is given by John Warham in the *Western Australian Naturalist*, vol. 5, no. 2, October 1955, p. 31, based on observations at Eclipse Island. Striking photographs illustrating the feeding operation are included as well as a nocturnal flight study over the rookery. In the first part of an account of the bird life at Wooroloo E. H. Sedgwick (p. 39) describes the habitat preferences of the local birds. Short notes in the same issue deal with the unusually early arrival of Rainbow-birds in the spring of 1954 (Rica Erickson), tortoises as predators of Coot (J. R. Ford), several records of the Red-eared Firetail in the Darling Range, occurrence of the White Ibis at Bunbury; breeding frequency records in the wheatbelt (E. H. Sedgwick), and an account of an unusually large clutch in the Grey Butcher-bird (A. H. Robinson).

An annotated list of the birds of Wooroloo by E. H. Sedgwick appears in the March 1956 number (vol. 5, no. 3, p. 63). An important record of the occurrence of the Arctic Tern on the Swan River is reported by G. M. Storr (p. 70).

In the May 1956 issue (vol. 5, no. 4) commences a series of papers by J. Gentili on tropical cyclones as bioclimatic activators (p. 82): reference is made to the meteorological backgrounds of notable bird irruptions in the State, including those of the White-winged Black Tern. A remarkable recovery of a ringed European Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) is reported by G. M. Dunnet; the bird was marked in Sweden on July 9, 1955 as a nestling and was found dead south of Fremantle six months later, on January 7, 1956, after presumably flying around the Cape of Good Hope. This is the first occurrence of the Common Tern in Western Australia, but the east Asiatic subspecies is known to migrate to the eastern States.

In vol. 5, no. 5, July 1956, E. Lindgren describes a visit to Lion Island in the Recherche Archipelago (p. 97), and V. Serventy an excursion to Queen Victoria Spring (p. 102). He describes a remarkable concentration of Budgerygahs which even landed on the canopy of the motor vehicle under the impression that the sheen of the enamel was water. L. Glauert reports the finding of a Gannet (*Sula serrator*), on the sea beach near Northampton, which had been ringed in New Zealand; this is the first occasion on which marked members of the New Zealand breeding population have been taken in the State.—D.L.S.

**Australian Orioles and Figbirds.**—In keeping with present-day views of many taxonomists, the orioles and figbirds are treated as a family unit by Allen Keast in his recent review of Australian forms ('Variation in the Australian Oriolidae', *Proc. Roy. Zool. Soc. N.S.W.*, for 1954-55, pp. 19-25, April 10, 1956). Specimens housed in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the Australian Museum,

Sydney, were examined during the study. It is noteworthy that in both genera, *Oriolus* and *Sphecotheres*, "there is a predominantly green species (mainly eastern in distribution) and a yellow northern one, suggesting similar selective circumstances may have operated during the speciation of the two groups". It is also of interest that all four Australian species occur with noticeable limited distribution in islands north of Australia.

Three geographical races of the Olive-backed Oriole are accepted—the nominate *sagittatus* (Cairns to Adelaide), *affinis* (Derby to the Norman River) and *magnirostris* (Cape York birds agree with this New Guinea form with a restricted island range). *Oriolus flavocinctus* extends (in Australia) from the Kimberleys north and east to the southern limits of the rain-forests north of Townsville, and, although variable in its degree of yellowness which Dr. Keast believes may be correlated with the humidity of its forest habitat, it remains undivided. The nominate *Sphecotheres vieilloti*, described originally from near Rockhampton, extends south to Sydney, and the northern *salvadorii*, of the Port Moresby area (New Guinea) is believed to be the race reaching south to Townsville, although additional material could uphold the validity of *stalkerii* for these southern birds. However, *S. flaviventris* is 'relatively homogeneous' and division of races in Australia should not be recognized, but the Kei Islands race (*cucullata*) seems subspecifically distinct.—A.R.M.

Finches.—Ian Harman's book of this title was published in Wisconsin, but appears to have been produced largely for British bird fanciers. The author, who now resides near Melbourne, has written a number of pet books—on cats, dogs, aquaria, fishponds, and reptiles (as pets).

There is no reason why aviculture and field ornithology should be mutually exclusive as many folk consider. There are considerably fewer bird students who cage their birds than those who observe them in the wild, but birds in confinement, properly housed and cared for, can offer opportunity for the recording of habits and behaviour studies. There is, however, a tendency for bird fanciers to look only to matters of housing, feeding and bird ailments. Mr. Harman includes chapters on those aspects, but by far the greater portion of his book—110 of the 134 pages—consists of notes on individual species, including description, habitat, nesting notes, characteristics in captivity, hybrids and a number of other matters. The notes are informative and concise. Text drawings and colour plates by R. A. Vowles are an attractive addition.—C.E.B.

Generic Placing of the Bronze-Cuckoos.—The bronze-cuckoos are found in Australia and New Zealand, Asia and Africa, and the numerous genera which were formerly accepted have in recent years shrunk to three only—*Chalcites* for the Asian and Australasian birds, and *Chrysococcyx* and *Lampromorpha* for the African. Chapin, Peters and Friedmann had long urged the fusion of the two African genera, and now Andrew J. Berger ('On the anatomy and relationships of glossy cuckoos of the genera *Chrysococcyx*, *Lampromorpha*, and *Chalcites*', *Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus.*, vol. 103, 1955, pp. 585-597) recommends an even wider merger. After studying the pterylosis, osteology, myology, syrinx and viscera of representatives of each of the groups, he concludes that all of the glossy cuckoos are congeneric and, following the law of priority, all of the described species must be placed in the genus *Chrysococcyx* Boie, 1826. This conclusion appears sound and its acceptance by Australian ornithologists will involve the disappearance of the familiar name *Chalcites* Lesson, 1830.—D.L.S.

Eggs of the Great Knot.—The one and only clutch of the eggs of the Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*) in the world's collections is that obtained by the Norwegian ornithologist Johan Karen on June 19, 1917, at the mouth of the Kolyma River, in north-east Siberia. A preliminary description of this unique set was given by his friend, H. Tho. L.

Schaanning, the veteran ornithologist of the Stavanger Museum, Norway, in the *Ibis*, 1929, p. 38. Now Schaanning has given an extended account, accompanied by a beautiful coloured plate, in a paper on the whole of Karen's surviving material of his Siberian expedition—'A contribution to the ornithology of eastern Siberia', *Nytt Magasin for Zoologi*, vol. 2, 1954, pp. 91-115. A photostat copy of Karen's original label and a photograph of one of the parent birds, both of which were procured by the collector, are also included. The specimens were held at the Stavanger Museum whilst Schaanning was studying them, but after his death they were transferred to the Zoological Museum, Oslo, where the reviewer had the privilege recently of examining them.

The nest was found at 1,500 feet elevation on a barren mountain ridge, probably near a larch forest on the mountain side overlooking the Kolyma delta. Schaanning remarks that "the eggs have a very characteristic colour, quite unlike the colour in all other wader eggs known to the author". Comparisons by the reviewer suggested a resemblance with some eggs of the Dunlin, Sanderling and Green Sandpiper, though all of these are smaller. Schaanning's plate is a good reproduction, but the eggs are more heavily spotted and rather darker at the blunt ends than his figure indicates. Though no other eggs have been collected, the Russian ornithologist, Portenko, later found downy young at the Anadyr River.—D.L.S.

## Correspondence

To the Editor.

Sir,—We are now in our ninth year of duck-banding, and I am at present analysing the returns. In general it would appear that our native Grey Duck disperses widely after the breeding season, but the introduced Mallard rarely cruises more than 25 miles from the place of banding. Recoveries of Grey Ducks have been reported from the length and breadth of the country and two bands have even been reported from the Chatham Islands.

I have often wondered if one of our bands would ever be reported from Australia. I have only recently returned from a long stay in America to find that a Grey Duck was supposedly recovered in one of the eastern Australian states in either 1950 or 1951. These rather hazy reports have come in from three independent sources. Apparently the recovery was reported in the newspapers.

As this case is of great interest to us it would be very much appreciated if you could spare the space to insert a query in *The Emu* concerning the fate of this duck.

Yours, etc.,

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