

1953. We were attracted by the bird's call and it continued to utter its plaintive cry for several minutes while we stood 15 or 20 yards distant.

Rhipidura rufifrons. Rufous Fantail.

A pair was seen in December 1955, in dense overgrown country by Mt. Tidbinbilla on the way to Fisherman's Gap. The birds were extremely agitated and came to within a few feet of my wife and myself.

Coracina robusta. Little Cuckoo-Shrike.

First seen on April 26, 1954, not far from the Canberra power station near the Molonglo River. It was seen in company with two or three Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes. It was seen again on Capital Hill on July 22, 1956.

Artamus melanops. Black-faced Wood-Swallow.

Seen on two occasions by my wife and me, though only once in the A.C.T. This was at Ginninderra Falls on December 3, 1955. The previous occasion (outside the A.C.T.) was at Lake George, on December 27, 1953.

Of these five species, three are mentioned in Lamm and White's article; these are the Eastern Swamp-nen, the Rufous Fantail and the Little Cuckoo-Shrike. The others have not been recorded in any list for the A.C.T. which has come to my notice.

Notes on a Trip to the Macquarie Marshes

By E. L. HYEM, Barrington, N.S.W.

Recently I visited the Macquarie marshes, in north-western New South Wales, and was fortunate enough to find all three species of ibis breeding together along a lignum-lined channel at the edge of the swamps. There were four separate colonies in the space of about a mile of channel.

The Straw-necked species was the most plentiful, with the Glossy next, and the White the least numerous, though, as the last-named species appeared to have started to breed earlier than the others, many young birds might have already left the area.

In the first colony examined, breeding activities were almost over, most young birds being able to fly, though they only flew from one lignum clump to another as I wandered about, and made no attempt to leave the area as the old birds did.

A short distance downstream, a second colony was discovered. It was a small one and nests were situated on clumps of lignum scattered about an open stretch of water. White Ibis and Royal Spoonbills comprised this colony, the Ibis having large young in the nest and the Spoonbills having young just hatched or chipping eggs. A young Ibis floundered off a nest into a short growth of rushes and caused such a

commotion that I went to investigate and was promptly attacked by a very angry Eastern Swamp-hen.

It was here that several Musk Ducks were seen, but they soon disappeared into the great beds of rushes across the channel. A Black Swan came sailing out onto the open water, followed by two downy cygnets.

Further down was the third, and largest, colony, composed mostly of Straw-necked and Glossy Ibises. At last occupied nests of the latter species were seen, containing young in various stages of growth. Nests of the Glossy Ibis were more substantially built than those of the other species and always close to the water. Only a few were noticed on top of lignum clumps, but they were low down, on the edges. Generally the nests were situated amongst the stems of the lignum a few inches above water and often right in under the platforms trodden down by the Straw-necked species.

Straw-necked Ibis were in hundreds in this colony, nests containing young from just-hatched up to half-fledged, though there were also a few eggs. It was noticeable that, on each individual lignum, the young were at the same stage of growth though there might be quite a considerable difference between young on adjoining clumps. On one large clump which supported about thirty nests, all the recently-hatched chicks were dead. I could not even guess at the reason for this as chicks in surrounding groups were lively enough.

Across a stretch of deep water could be seen another colony and, after some trouble, I got around to it. The lignum was freshly trodden down here and all nests contained eggs with the exception of three or four small groups of White Ibis nests which contained half-fledged young. Straw-necked Ibis comprised the bulk of this colony, but Glossy Ibis were in fair numbers and their nests held three eggs, as a rule, sometimes four and occasionally five. Two clutches of six and seven eggs were observed, but these were obviously the result of at least two hens laying in the one nest.

Local people told me that the ibis do not breed every year and that the previous nesting was in 1950.

Upstream from the ibis colonies was a large area of red gums growing in shallow water, and in the trees were seen several breeding colonies of spoonbills, both Royal and Yellow-billed. The trees were big, and time was short, so nests were not examined closely, but young birds could be seen on, or near, most of them. There was also an extensive breeding colony of Pacific (White-necked) Herons with which were associated Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants. In the sparse growth of rushes amongst the trees, several Coot had their nests. One nest of the large Black Cormorant was seen. The solitary full-fledged young bird flew on to the water and dived from sight.

Two White-breasted Sea-Eagles were seen soaring over the swamps and later a nest was found. It was a very large one and had probably been in use for many years.

In a patch of lignum well out in the water two wrens (*Malurus*) were seen. They were very shy and I followed them for some time in hopes that they might be *M. melanotus*, a species I have not seen. However, they turned out to be *M. cyaneus* rather to my surprise, as I had not expected to see this species so far west. Purple-backed Wrens (*M. assimilis*) were observed in a patch of small lignum bushes on the plain and two nests with young were found, one containing a brood of five. Several parties of White-winged Wrens (*M. leucopterus*) were seen in salt-bush country.

I had no time to explore to any extent the great beds of reeds and rushes across the channel, but doubtless they held much of interest. Reed-Warblers and Little Grass-birds appeared plentiful. Several Little Bitterns were seen and a nest found containing five eggs just starting to hatch.

Numerous wild pigs were seen and no doubt they eat some eggs and young birds, but probably not very many as a great number of the nests I saw would have been accessible to them. They were usually seen feeding out on the plain, but they also feed on the bulbous roots of the rushes where these are growing in shallow water. Whilst at one of the ibis colonies I heard several pigs squealing and grunting as they entered the water from the plain, and I watched to see if they were after the birds, but they waded and swam right through the lignum and disappeared into the rushes.

I might add that my car had to be abandoned thirty miles from the swamps and the remainder of the journey was accomplished by truck, jeep and finally horse. However, the bird life more than compensated for the difficulty of access.

Albino Spur-winged Plovers.—This year (1957) I have seen two pure albino Spur-winged Plovers in north-eastern Tasmania—one at Patersonia (about 16 miles from Launceston) in January, the other at Scottsdale (40 miles from Launceston) in February and March. The Patersonia bird seems to have disappeared, but the Scottsdale one is still feeding with a flock, mainly on the Scottsdale golf-links. It is just possible that the Patersonia bird may be the Scottsdale bird. I have also received reports of one being seen eight miles further north-east from Scottsdale.

Spur-winged Plovers are now so numerous in the farming districts of Tasmania—it is nothing unusual to see a flock of a hundred in a paddock during the autumn—that there is, presumably, a greater chance of albinism occurring. —J. R. SKEMP, Myrtle Bank, Tas., 12/3/57.