

visit was obtained. Identification of the flora is based on reports furnished by Mr. W. Bateman, Forestry Officer for the Northern Territory, which were kindly made available to us by Mr. Phillips.

## REFERENCES

- Serventy, D. L. (1952). 'The Bird Islands of the Sahul Shelf', *The Emu*, 52, 33-59.  
Söderberg, R. (1918). 'Results of Dr. E. Mjöberg's Swedish Scientific Expeditions to Australia 1910-1913, XVIII—Studies of the Birds in North-West Australia,' *Kungl. Sv. Vet. Akademiens Handlingar*, 52, no. 17, pp. 1-116.

**Mutual 'Delousing' by Birds.**—On February 24, 1957, at Yanko Creek, north of Jerilderie, New South Wales, my attention was drawn to twelve Dusky Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) perched on a horizontal, dead branch at the top of a red gum. The birds were packed so tightly together that I had difficulty at first ascertaining exactly how many there were. When I had at last sorted heads from tails, I was able to see that the birds were all busy going through the actions of preening, or apparently so. Some birds were rummaging in their own plumage but, for the most part, each bird's main interest seemed to be centred in its neighbour. One bird would busily probe with its bill in the feathers of its neighbour. The throat, breast, back of the neck and the crown of the head all received attention. When the first bird finished the second would reciprocate. At times a bird would try to probe under its neighbour's wing or reach a more inaccessible part of the other's body. Invariably the awkward action combined with the pressure of the other birds caused one of the pair to fall out. It would then instantly take up position at the end of the line of birds, shuffling in as tight as possible, until to the naked eye, it lost its separate identity and then commenced the feather probing again on its new neighbour. The weather at the time was hot and there was no necessity for such close snuggling.

Obviously the birds were 'delousing' each other in the same way as the Grey-crowned Babblers (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) mentioned by me in *The Emu*, vol. 55, p. 313. Since the publication of that note I have recorded identical behaviour in the Chestnut-crowned Babbler (*P. ruficeps*) and White-browed Babbler (*P. superciliosus*), as well as the Apostle Bird (*Struthidea cinerea*). It is possible the habit occurs in all species which have similar communal behaviour to the latter birds. These habitually nest and roost together and could easily fall into the way of assisting in each other's toilet. The clustering of Wood-Swallows at roost is frequently recorded, and is a probable explanation of how the habit of mutual 'delousing' originated in the Dusky Wood-Swallow.—JOHN N. HOBBS, Finley, N.S.W., 7/5/57.