

chipped in one place, as though caused by a tooth of the goanna. I did not replace the egg in the nest.

The sunbirds continued with their building for six days, and each morning, for a time, the cuckoos were present in the same tree. During this period, when my husband opened the front door of the garage, I would open the back door and stand by it in anticipation. The female sunbird had shown signs of being ready to lay, as indicated by her entering and sitting in the nest for short periods, and it appeared that if the cuckoo was going to deposit an egg, the occasion was now imminent.

On the seventh day, at 6.30 a.m., soon after the garage had been opened, I saw one of the Rufous-breasted Bronze-Cuckoos fly to the nest carrying an egg in its bill; it clung to the side of the nest and, placing its head in the aperture, deposited the egg in the nest chamber. I rushed to the nest and on examination found the egg, which was still warm, coloured and freckled like the egg previously deposited. After the cuckoo left the nest it rejoined its mate in the frangipanni tree and both birds soon disappeared. I did not see where the cuckoo laid the egg, nor did I ascertain whether the female or the male cuckoo deposited it in the nest.

During these happenings the sunbirds were absent, apparently feeding, and it must be stressed that at no time up to this point had they been disturbed by, or shown any interest in, the cuckoos. However, when the female returned she discovered the egg and her cries brought the male to the nest. After much chattering the birds deserted their nest and then began building another in the old position near the kitchen window, where, later, the female brooded, but without success. Perhaps the eggs were taken by a snake, which was known to have attempted to steal the eggs from an earlier nest.

Flocking of White-backed Magpies.—Although occasional flocking is known to occur among White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) in South Australia, there is as yet no evidence that such flocking has a social significance similar to that recorded for the Western Magpie (*G. dorsalis*). It seems probable, however, that flocking does occur much more frequently in White-backed Magpies than has been suspected, and that it may indeed take place regularly and fill a definite rôle in the biology of the species.

My observations during the past two years have revealed that flocking takes place in the central region of the State in various seasons of the year, and that it involves from eight to twenty-odd birds. However, the function of flocking in the White-backed Magpie remains to be determined by investigation.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 27/5/62.