

Notes on the Australian Reed-Warbler

(Acrocephalus australis).

By Edwin Ashby, 28/1/1930.

At the end of the second week in December last a Reed-Warbler took up its residence in the reeds in a small reservoir near my house, "Wittunga," Blackwood. I have for years been hoping that these splendid songsters would take up their quarters here, but, in spite of growing a fine cover of reeds and several large clumps of Spanish reed (often called bamboo), heretofore only once has the Reed-Warbler visited us, and then at most for a day or so. From the middle of December till the end of the first week in January we rejoiced in the almost continuous song of this bird. Throughout the day, but especially in the early morning and the evening, this delightful vocalist performed to the joy of ourselves and visitors. From our back veranda it could be heard almost to perfection, and on several occasions well after dark we have assembled there to listen to it. Its rich notes, or some of its rich notes, so closely like some of the notes of the Nightingale and its habit of singing after dark, put it in the first rank of Australian singing birds. Early in the second week of this month (January) the song absolutely ceased, and for many days we concluded that the charming visitor had left us altogether, but since then, and again to-day, 28th January, my daughter and myself have very occasionally heard a single note, and last week, on 21st January, my daughter heard it make two, possibly three, notes. Why did the song cease so abruptly? Was the cock bird singing to his sitting spouse, and had they been tempted to stay at our little reservoir and venture on a second brood—presumably the first brood must have been brought out much earlier in some other quarter, probably in the valley of the Sturt River, only a few miles away? Do my readers know whether the male only sings while the hen is sitting and becomes silent when the earnest duties of feeding the young have to be faced? We are anticipating that next spring our vocalists will decide to bring forth their first brood at Wittunga. They will have a hearty welcome.

[It is thought that both sexes sing. North describes the principal call as "*Twitchee-twitchee-twitchee-quarty-quarty-quarty.*" Two broods are usually reared during the breeding season—October to February in South Australia.—EDTORS.]