

*Bird Notes.*

Florieton Notes. By N. Hiles Pearse. October 25, 1932.

The country is full of grass and herbage of all kinds, also wild flowers galore, consequently birds of all kinds are here in great numbers. The Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) has been in the past a very rare visitor to these parts, only a single specimen being seen occasionally. A month ago his scale-running notes could be heard all over the station, and numbers, mostly singles and pairs, were seen when one was out riding. Latterly they have only been heard at rare intervals. Some weeks back a large flock of White-browed Wood-Swallows (*Artamus superciliosus*) arrived. They usually appear like this suddenly, in great numbers. As this flock was quite close to the house they were more noticeable, and they were soon very busy making their frail little nests in the adjacent sandalwoods (native) and in boxthorns, in hollows of posts and any place that would carry a few crossed sticks. One pair actually commenced a nest behind the intersection of two cut-off palm leaves near my front gate, right in the garden. Everything was going along merrily and the air was full of chattering, when a few days later, without any ostensible reason, they all like the Arabs "folded their tents and as silently stole away." I have seen large flocks on the station since, but would have liked the first flock to have stopped around the house. We have a few acres of grass land fenced around the homestead, and it is just alive with ground and other birds, chiefly Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*), Ground-Lark (*Anthus australis*), and that wonderful songbird the Rufous Songlark (*Cinchorhamphus mathewsi*), whose melodious notes can be heard day and night. Further afield we have numbers of the Brown Songlark (*C. cruralis*), more impressive in appearance, but lacking the beautiful cadence in his song. Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*) in great numbers. Little Quail (*Turnix velox*), Banded Plovers (*Zonifer tricolor*) in flocks and not quite so many Australian Dotterels (*Peltodytes australis*) as usual. Other birds which have appeared in the garden lately are a pair of White-winged Trillers (*Lalage tricolor*), a small flock of White-browed Babblers (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*), a party of Blue Wrens (*Malurus* sp.), and a pair each of Willie Wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) and Restless Flycatchers (*Seisura inquieta*). A pair of Magpie Larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) have become very friendly with my poultry in their large run. Quite recently a Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*) flew over the house towards dusk, and I saw a

*Bird Notes.*

specimen, probably the same bird, on the ground in a lane only a few yards from the kitchen door. Crested Pigeons (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) are about in large flocks, and, though it may be coincidence, of late years since these birds have increased to such large numbers, the Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) is but rarely seen. A pair of Grey Butcher Birds (*Cracticus torquatus*) took up their residence in my fruit garden for months, quite close to a clump of bamboos, where large numbers of Sparrows and Starlings were wont to roost. They have gone now, and I miss their glorious song. I expect they left to nest in the scrub. On one occasion before they left I saw them feeding on skinned carcasses of rabbits left by the trappers. Fourteen Black-tailed Native Hens (*Tribonyx ventralis*) have established themselves at my large dam, half-a-mile from the house. In my rides about the run I never remember seeing before so many nests of the Crimson Chat (*Epthianura tricolor*), Orange Chat (*E. aurifrons*), and White-fronted Chat (*E. albifrons*). There are scores of them containing eggs or young, and the birds all do the "broken-wing stunt" to lure one away from the nest when flushed suddenly. My daughter scared an Orange Chat suddenly from a cotton-bush as she was riding along, and it flew straight into a netting-fence and was killed. I also scared a Little Quail into an ordinary wire fence, but it escaped with a broken wing. In a *Tecoma capensis* shrub in my garden there is a nest of a Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*) with one large fat young in it. Last year's nest is quite close to the new one. On top of a verandah post a few yards away, close in under the roof, a pair of Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) made a nest, five eggs were laid, and the whole clutch was brought out and have just recently left the nest. Other birds I have noticed are several pairs of Red-capped Robins (*Petroica goodenovii*), flocks of Ringneck Parrots (*Barnardius barnardi*), the usual flocks of Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*), six White Cockatoos (*K. galerita*), Blue Bonnets (*Psephotus haematogaster*), about a dozen Cockatiels (*Leptolophus hollandicus*), and just recently the beautiful little Budgerygahs (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) have commenced flying in thousands, just a sheen of green against the dark background of spear grass, and already the wire fences and telephone lines are taking toll of these pretty creatures. I gave some members of my family an interesting experience recently, though it was by no means new to me. We were out in the station buckboard and saw a mob of 18 Emus (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) on the

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*Bird Notes.*

outskirts of a clump of bluebush. I stopped the car, asked the family to keep quite silent and to watch what happened. In a few moments we were surrounded by these birds, which are extraordinarily curious by nature. The older birds, three in number, distinguishable by their duller plumage, a drab brown, compared with the darker blackish newer looking feathers of the young birds, kept warily at a distance, but the young birds had a good look at the car, craning their long necks all ways, until I suddenly tooted the horn, and they were off like the wind. The Hawks are represented by the Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*), Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*), Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*), and Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*). The Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaetus audax*) are very scarce these days. I have seen only a couple of pairs in a year.

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