

A Few Notes from the South-East for the Summer 1936-1937.

By D. W. Brummitt.

A trip was made to Bool Lagoon, leaving Robe on 30th December, 1936. The afternoon of the 30th was spent in the Bool Lagoon. Thousands of young Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*) were in the teatrees. Only about four nests of the Yellow-billed Spoonbills (*Platalea flavipes*) were found—the birds had only recently started to nest, and apparently no more were going to nest this season. A nest of the Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) containing four eggs was found in the teatree. We then visited the reeds and searched for a nest of the Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*). Three nests were found—two with two eggs each; the third had the full set of four eggs. This nest was a platform built of reeds and supported by growing reeds; the top was about six inches across and flat; the whole structure was 8½ inches across at its widest and 9½ inches deep; the surface was two feet from the water and the reeds were about ten to twelve feet high. The next day we visited the Joanna scrub and searched for nests of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*). Six nests were found, each with two eggs. The height from the ground in the gumtrees ranged from 20 to 70 feet; dimensions of the hollow from which I took a set of eggs (2)—the entrance spout faced upwards and outwards, and was oval-shaped, 11 x 6 inches; depth of hollow 24 inches, diameter 10 inches; height from ground 40 feet. The eggs were laid on the bare, or decayed, wood.

A visit was paid to the Baudin' Rocks on 18th January, 1937 (see previous article in "S.A. Ornithologist," Vol. XII, p. 202, 1934). Unfortunately, it was a very wet day, so that the trip was very unpleasant, and only the southern island was visited. Fairy Penguins (*Eudyptula undina*) were nesting much as usual—quite a number had burrows. All seen were very bedraggled from the rain. A corpse of a Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) was found on the island. Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) were not nesting there this year, but were nesting in large numbers on an island some miles down the coast from Robe towards Beachport. Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*).—I have not seen these nesting, but last year I was told by people who know the bird that it was nesting there, and I was shown an egg, which was that of a Fairy Tern. Nankeen Night-Herons (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) were there in small numbers—some

young able to fly were about. A nest of the Little Grassbird (*Megalurus gramineus*) containing two eggs was found in a stunted boxthorn on the island. Rock Parrots (*Neophema petrophila*) were common and very wet, but no nests were found, although some of the birds seen appeared to have immature plumage.

The only new bird that I saw in the Robe district was a White Egret (*Egretta alba*). This bird (only one was seen) lived up to a characteristic of always returning to the same feeding spot after being disturbed. I do not know whether this is well-known, but I have several times noticed it, and many country people have spoken of it to me.

Crested Tern.—I endeavoured, at the Honorary Secretary's request, to ascertain the method a Tern adopts to catch its prey, either by spearing with closed beak or by catching between its mandibles. He asked me to examine the fish with this object in view. Unfortunately, the fish are rather difficult to obtain. The adults will not drop the fish, no matter how close one is to them, nor how quick a rush is made at them. The next means I tried was to find the youngster which had just received the fish, but this was likewise very difficult, as by the time one got within catching distance the birds were completely "boxed up," and it was impossible to tell one from the other. However, I have on several occasions obtained fish by regurgitation from a captured juvenile, and although the fish were in a fairly advanced stage of digestion, usually without a head, no mark indicating piercing was found. A regurgitated fish about five inches long (without head) was obtained from a young bird at the "German's" near Robe, this year, and was partially digested, so that it was easily separated into right and left halves along the vertebrae, and no mark of piercing was found, but marks showing where it had been gripped in the beak of the adult were easily discernible just behind the head.

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*).—Two of these birds were shot near Robe by some person towards the end of January, 1937. When I obtained them they were badly fly-blown and in such a very advanced stage of decomposition that skinning was not possible, and sexing too unpleasant. The measurements were—for the largest and the lightest-coloured bird, length, 3 feet 2 inches; spread, 6 feet 7 inches. The smaller, which was a very dark bird (almost black in parts), length, 3 feet 1 inch; spread, 6 feet 6 inches. No data was obtainable as to exact locality. Several pairs were seen around the district during January.