

The White-winged Chough (*Corcorax melanorhamphus*).

By E. S. Paterson, Brighton, S.A. 21st May, 1937.

During Easter of 1936 I happened to see four Choughs in a bird shop, so I bought them with the intention of studying their habits. They were put in a flight cage about thirty by sixteen feet with a few other birds. I noticed that they were friendly family birds, and were peaceful until attacked, but would then retaliate furiously. When annoyed, vexed, or excited their eyes would turn from bluey-black to red, which latter colour appeared to radiate from the pupil and include the ball of the eye; they also became very noisy. For food they were at first given mixed seed and a little meat, but I found that they would live well on the seed alone, and the insects they collected from the ground in the cage.

One day in June, 1936, while I was entering the cage, one of the Choughs escaped, and as I could not retrieve it I let another bird free. Finding that they were two cocks, I let a hen go in the hope of their breeding, which they did in October, 1936. A nest was built on a horizontal limb of a pinetree (*Pinus* sp.) about forty feet from the ground. The nest resembled that of a Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), being round, open at the top, and made of mud. In due course three young were hatched, but the White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*), their greatest enemy, tossed one of the young Choughs out of the nest and a second one disappeared. The third young bird was reared, but even when it was fully grown the parent birds did not desert the remaining Chough that was still in the cage, so, seeing that the latter bird appeared lonely, I set it free also. The five birds stayed about for three weeks, when they flew away.

I thought I had lost them altogether, but they came back after three months, then at intervals of a fortnight, but only staying a day and night each time. They would go to the nest, clean it out and repair it, if so needed. About four days ago I noticed the birds again; so I am hoping they will return in the spring to breed again this year.

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