

NOTES ON JUVENILE AUSTRALIAN RAVENS. (*Corvus coronoides*)

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It has long been known that fledglings of all Australian species of *Corvus* have bluish-grey irides, but the exact stage at which this color changes to dark brown has not been defined satisfactorily as yet in any published account known to me. Recent investigations on the subject carried out by me, involving the examination of living birds as well as studying skins and recorded data relating to the Australian Raven, indicate that nestlings old enough to scramble out of the nest and flutter to the ground when disturbed have the eyes still bluish-grey, and this also applies to young birds out of the nest only a few days. Previously, I had seen juveniles not long out of the nest possessing dark-brown eyes, and, in spite of the contrary evidence published by Morgan (4) and Hyem (1), had concluded* that the eyes become brown before the birds leave the nest—a belief which McGillp (3) had earlier also expressed. Mathews (2) described a young Raven just out of the nest, taken at Warunda Creek, Eyre Peninsula, S.A., which had the irides "dull blue."

The deposition of pigment in the iris com-

mences at the inner margin of the organ, blackish blotches being formed which eventually coalesce and extend outwards to constitute a broad zone of dark brown, leaving only a narrow outer margin of the original bluish-grey. At this stage the birds are out of the nest probably not more than seven or eight days, and the base of the lower mandible is a pinkish-white color and the joints of the legs are white, which description agrees reasonably well with the color of these parts in Mathews' specimen, as described by him. Slightly older juveniles have the irides dark brown, usually with merely a faint and very narrow greyish outer ring. Eyes at this stage have been recorded by most collectors simply as "dark brown," "brown," or "hazel." Older juveniles have the lower mandible and the joints of the legs wholly black.

References to Literature.

- (1) Hyem, E. L. "Emu," XXXVI, p. 272; 1937.
- (2) Mathews, G. M. "Birds of Australia," XII, p. 391; 1926.
- (3) McGillp, J. Neil. "S.A. Ornithologist," VII, p. 72; 1923.
- (4) Morgan, A. M., Ref. 3.

* "S.A. Ornithologist," XV, pp. 73, 94; 1940.