
FEEDING HABIT OF THE BLACK-WINGED CURRAWONG

By J. NEIL MCGILP

On June 21, 1953, while walking through a stock paddock on "Caroway Farm," eight miles east of Mount Barker, South Australia, I noticed a Black-winged Currawong (*Strepera melanoptera*) flying almost overhead. It was carrying a small rat or mouse in its bill. The bird flew into a large Red Gum directly ahead. A few minutes later, it was seen well up in the tree and busily feeding on what had been carried. It was surprising for me to observe that the rat or mouse was staked on a small upright dry twig between a small forked branch. The bird was pulling small portions from the carcase in a horizontal manner. This feeding habit closely resembles that of a Butcher-bird and quite different from that of the Crow, which usually places and holds the food in or under the talons and pulls off the pieces with an upward motion.

Since making the above observation I have repeatedly visited the cage in the Adelaide Zoological Gardens containing a Currawong in the hope of seeing the bird feeding. On September 20, I noticed a Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) discard a small piece of meat on the ground. The Currawong flew down to the meat and picked it up in its bill and carried it up to the branch of an apparently dormant strut in the cage. The piece of meat was pushed down on a short upright spur of the branch and the Currawong started tugging at it in a horizontal manner. Several times the meat was dislodged but quickly replaced on the spur. This continued for several minutes before the Raven again took possession. The meat, now much reduced in size, was lifted from the spur on to the flat upper surface of the branch and held in the bird's feet while the Raven pulled off pieces, using an upward motion.
