

NOTES FROM NARACORTE

BY R. ATTIWILL.

During Easter (1955) Jack Hood and I organised a party to erect duck nests in the teatree at Bool Lagoon, and finally had 170 old bitumen drums placed in what we considered would be favorable nesting sites.

However, owing to the heavy rains up north, only a few ducks stayed here to breed, but as nearly 50 drums were occupied (some twice), we feel that our efforts were not

entirely wasted. The Musk Ducks laid in 10 or 12 of the lower ones, in some cases climbing 5 ft. or 6 ft. up the sloping teatree butts to reach the drums. Grey Teal and Black Duck took readily to those placed higher up, and by altering the positions of some of the drums we hope for better results next year.

All the drums are numbered, and each

time either Jack or I inspected the nests we kept a record of the occupied ones so that we can shift the others to better positions.

The Ibis nested in thousands and appeared to me to be most numerous since 1942. This year there was a fair number of four-egg clutches, whereas last year was a poor year and a lot of two-egg clutches were seen. About 20 pairs of Royal Spoonbills, and 6 or 7 pairs of Night Herons, together with the usual complement of shags also reared young.

We were keenly interested in 6 White Egrets which showed indications of nesting in the teatree, but did not carry on with the job. There were no White-necked Herons breeding anywhere in the district, and I think I saw only 2 single birds. Usually they are quite common, and nest in small colonies in several of the red gum swamps. Also only a few Black-tailed Native Hens turned up, but nearly all that arrived here nested, and all I looked at had 8 eggs.

The Honeyeaters were very plentiful early in the year, but a series of very heavy spring frosts cut the blossoms badly and I did not see as many nests as I expected. There were 3 pairs of Black-chinned Honeyeaters at Joanna, and although they indulged in a good deal of calling and chasing, etc., they did not settle down to nesting, as we hoped they would.

It seems that the extensive clearing of the mallee around Keith is gradually driving some species farther south, and several new birds have been seen around this district.

The Scrub Robin has been found at Lochaber, Padthaway and Frances, and has bred

at the two last-named places—I found one old nest and one young one still being fed by the parents.

Purple-backed Wrens and Ring-necked Parrots are two more that are now working down, and can be seen about 20 miles north of Naracoorte. One of my friends—a beekeeper near Padthaway—told me last week about another strange parrot around his camp, and from his description it must be a Blue Bonnet, and I hope to run out during the holidays and have a look for it.

Cuckoos were almost completely absent, and although I looked at dozens of suitable nests I did not find one egg and saw only two young Bronze sp., both being fed by Brown Thornbills.

I am still chasing after Golden Whistlers, but have not yet found a nest; on the other hand Rufous are quite plentiful and I can find their nests any time I care to look.

I had one more trip to Bool Lagoon on December 27, and saw several nests of Coots and Moorhens with fresh eggs in them. Two pairs of Royal Spoonbills were sitting on eggs, and another pair were just completing a new nest. A colony of Little Pied Cormorants had every stage, from young just flying, down to fresh eggs.

On the 28th, at Joanna, a Black-fronted Dotterel was sitting on three eggs on the side of the road, about a foot off the wheel tracks.

Red-tipped Pardalotes carrying nesting material into a hollow in a red gum, Spotted Pardalotes in burrow, obviously on eggs, and a Willy Wag on three fresh eggs, just about completes the year, as I think the recent hot spell will now put a stop to further nesting.