

OBSERVATIONS ON REGENT HONEYEATERS

Regent Honeyeaters (*Zanthoniza phrygia*) have from time to time at infrequent intervals in the past been observed in the Adelaide suburb of Kensington Gardens and in the Stonyfell area of the foothills a mile or so further to the east. Throughout the months of August, September and October, 1958, two of these Honeyeaters appeared in the Kensington Gardens area and were intermittently noticed by different observers resident in that locality. On November 9, 1958, a nest was found in one of the flowering gums growing in the footpath of Myall Avenue, approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles due east from Adelaide.

The nest was 18 feet above ground level, built on three thin horizontal branches and surrounded by a number of seed pods, making it very difficult to see from the ground. It was only by watching the birds fly into the tree that the nest was first located.

On the day of the discovery and for the next seven days I watched the nest from the ground at least once every day, and as one or other of the parent birds was brooding on the nest practically all that time I assumed that there were eggs in the nest.

On November 17, when first observed, the nest was unattended by the parent birds, but after a few minutes I saw one fly in and stand on the side of the nest apparently to feed young. This procedure was repeated on several occasions on this day and on later days, and it seems reasonable to assume that the eggs were hatched on the night of the 16th or the morning of the 17th.

On November 23, the head of a young bird was seen over the top of the nest. On November 25 two heads were seen and a few minutes later one young bird was seen to stand up in the nest and exercise its wings.

On the morning of November 27, one young bird was seen to climb up and stand on the edge of the nest, and while standing there it was fed three times by the parent birds, but there was no sign of their feeding another young one nor was more than one young bird seen again after November 25.

On November 27 the young bird was sitting on a bough about 3 feet to the side of the nest, and on the morning of Novem-

ber 28 it had moved up the tree to a position about 4 feet above the nest. On this day the tail feathers, although appearing to be only about 1 inch long, showed from underneath a clear yellow color.

On the morning of November 29 the young bird was still in the same tree but at a distance of about 12 feet away from the nest. By this time distinct yellow color could be seen on its wings and the tail appeared longer. The young bird's head plumage was already noticeably darker than its body plumage.

In the afternoon of November 29 the owner of the adjoining garden found the young bird on the ground under a Flame Tree in his garden about 6 yards away from the gum where the nest was located. He picked it up and placed it in the Flame Tree.

On the following morning I saw it near the top of this tree, which is approximately 15 feet high. Later in the morning it was back in the flowering gum, while late in the afternoon it was in a Prunus tree in the adjoining garden and about 12 yards away from the flowering gum.

This was the last occasion on which the young bird was seen, although an adult bird was seen in the locality on December 1, and again on December 3.

Both parent birds shared in the brooding and later in the feeding of the young, which took place constantly, whenever I was present, at intervals of never more than about 5 minutes.

The birds were unafraid of humans. On occasions, while chasing insects, they would fly within a few feet of where I was standing. Quite often one would be in the grass on the footpath and would not take flight when motor cars and motor cycles went along the road within a few feet of it.

The parent birds were frequently seen chasing and catching insects both whilst in flight and on the ground and then flying to the young one and feeding it. Quite often the birds hovered in flight over the grass whilst seeking insects.

At no time during the three weeks when

the nest was under observation was any call heard in any way resembling the ringing "clink clank" mentioned by Leach or the rich, bell-like note referred to by Cayley. The only sound approaching a call was a soft gurgling note, when the parent alighted on the nest or alongside the young bird, and a scolding sound when the birds were attacking others. The absence of the ringing call was also noticed by those who observed the birds in the months prior to nesting.

I could not see any difference in the size

of the parent birds nor could I detect any difference in the colorings, although two other observers insisted that the coloring of one bird was brighter than the other and another claimed that one was bigger than the other.

To appreciate fully the beauty of this bird it should be seen in flight, as only then when the tail feathers are fanned out and the wings extended can the pattern of its beautiful colorings be seen.—F. L. Collison, Kensington Gardens.