

## Notes on Hatching of Cuckoo and Wren.

By J. W. Mellor.

During last year some interesting evidence came under notice relative to the nidification of the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo (*chrysoccyx basalis mellori*) an egg of which was discovered in a nest of the Southern Blue Wren (*Maturus cyaneus leggei*) at Fulham, S.A., on August 30, there being three eggs of the latter bird also in the nest. The eggs were left undisturbed to find out the rotation of hatching, which started next morning, August 31, by the appearance of the young cuckoo, its size being surprisingly large compared with the egg from which it had just emerged, which was exactly the size of those of the wren, and hardly any difference in colouration. The young cuckoo measured in inches in its somewhat crunched up position 1.14 inches from bill to tail, by .54 across the body, the wings being still folded up, and showing an abnormal spike at the spurious wing, while the claws were curved and exceedingly sharp, resembling those of a young hawk. The cuckoo was removed and preserved, and a close watch kept for the appearance of the young wrens, the first of which did not come out until early on the morning of September 2, followed quickly by a second chick the same morning, the third egg being chipped and hatched out during the afternoon of the same day, but the young wrens were but half the size of the cuckoo when born. Thus it can easily be seen how the young cuckoo "rules the roost," being at least two days in advance of the first wren hatched out, and at birth assuming double proportions to the young of its foster parents, the young wrens are soon edged out, or trampled to death as the vigorous young cuckoo clamours for food, which the comparatively small foster parents are barely able to supply to the extent of its needs. On September 13 the three young wrens left the nest, and perched on the twigs near by, while the parent birds fed them. It is exceedingly strange why Nature should have ordained things, so that the young of the useful little blue wren, and kindred birds should be destroyed by the small cuckoos, but it is evident from observations that such is the case, the cuckoos being given abnormal opportunities to predominate and overcome.