

Note on the Little Black Cormorant (*Mesocarbo ater*—Lesson).

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(Contribution from the S.A. Museum.)

In January, 1911, the Museum received from Mr. E. Ashby three nests and two nestlings of the Little Black Cormorant, which he obtained in a swamp about twenty miles above Manum, on the River Murray. They were taken out of a dead Eucalypt which contained thirty-two nests of the same species.

The two young birds which are nearly as large as an adult, have their wings and tail feathered, whilst the neck, body, and posterior third of the head, are covered with black down. The anterior two thirds of the head and the whole of the throat are naked, the clothed portion reaching a little beyond the ears. The naked skin of the crown is reddish brown, becoming lighter on the sides of the head, and yellowish on the throat. A black line extends from a little below the ear to the base of the bill, passing through the eye, a black spot is present on the lower mandible immediately below the eye.

The only naked skin on the head of the adult is a leaden grey patch surrounding the eye, and a similarly coloured area at the base of the lower mandible. Mathews states* "The immature bird differs from the adult in being more or less brown on the head, sides of face, foreneck and chest; and white-tipped plumes on the head much less numerous." Apparently his immature specimens were fully fledged, in which case the greater portion of the head and throat had already been covered with feathers.

This naked condition of the head and neck in the nestlings seems to be a provision by nature to avoid the soiling of the plumage when the young birds insert their bills into the gullet of their parents when being fed.

*Birds of Australia, by Gregory M. Mathews, Vol. IV, pt. 2, p. 175.