

Bird Notes.

By J. W. Mellor.

December 2.—The Shepherds' Companion (*Leucocirca tricolor*) which started to sit on November 19, for the third time this season, in a lemon scented pine near my back door at "Mellor Park," hatched out her young on December 2, and on December 19 the four young birds left the nest and were fed both parent birds.

December 13.—Six black swan flew over Lockleys in the evening, from the north and going south. Several young white-backed magpies hatched late in November, left the nest while yet quite young and barely able to fly, but happily they succeeded in growing up.

A White-plumed Honeyeater (*Ptilotula pencillata whitei*) nested at my bedroom window early in December and hatched out two young which are now only quarter grown, but, owing, to the cold wet weather that has at times prevailed, the bird has had an extremely hard time in sitting. The two parent birds bring food for the little mites; aphids, scale blight, and the like, seem to be the chief food. The hen may be sitting to keep the

young warm, but when the cock comes she hops off, and while he is giving his tit bit to the young she gets going and returns quickly with some food. When coming to the nest both birds give a low soft call of "chick chick," whereupon the wee mites instinctively hold up their heads to be fed. Now and again the old bird picks up a small bit of excreta from the bottom of the nest, not to drop it just outside, but flies away with it for some distance. On several occasions I have had to repair the nest, by tying it to the bough with pieces of string to prevent it coming away on one side.

January—Mr. J. W. Mellor reports—The month has seen numbers of birds nesting, doubtless owing to the excessively dry weather existing during the spring, followed by the bounteous rains at Christmas, and again at the opening of the New Year

On January 1, eleven rose breasted cockatoos were seem flying in a bevy amongst the red gums.

The Southern White-plumed Honey-eaters that had their nest within several feet of my bedroom window on the slender twigs of an *Ailanthus* tree, brought out their young during the early part of the month, and on January 11, either the same, pair, or another of like size and colouration started to construct-I their nest close by; again on the leaves of a tree of heaven (*Ailanthus glandulosus*), within three or four feet of my museum window, and without "fear or trembling" as it now sits, and watches me examining my stuffed birds. Even as I write, the female is watching me at my work, knowing well that she is safer by far in her present position than she would be at a distance from my habitation. I noted the nesting operations when the first little piece of cobweb was twined around the stem of the leaf, and by the 18th, just seven days, the nest had been completed, both birds sharing in the work, of building. Then followed several days of cessation, and on the 22nd the first egg was laid, and the second on the 24th. The bird there began to sit and incubation has been going on slowly The birds are never idle, as ever and anon one or the other will find the nest 'becoming thin, and will get beneath and sit upon a twig and take observations, then getting a little cobweb or cocoon silk will cling to the little cup shaped nest beneath, and with its sharp bill poke the little bits, of soft packing into the small holes, and thus fill them up and make the home snug; and warm for the offspring which soon must appear.

A case of the advisability of leaving the old nests of birds, in sight came under my notice this month, when a pair of birds built their cup shaped nest, suspending it from the ivy leaves on an old building. The nest was completed in due course and

two eggs (the general clutch here) were laid. The eggs met with misfortune early in the incubation period, and the nest was left empty, but what was my surprise the other day when examining it, to find that the bird had laid in it again and reared a pair of fluffy little nestlings.

Zebra finches are still breeding in the boxthorn bushes on the sand dunes and young ones are coming out.

The Shepherds' Companions or "Willie Wagtails" as they are familiarly known have ceased to breed, having brought out their young early in the season, in spite of the drought.

The Boobook Owls have not ceased their mournful notes at Lockleys, where at night they may be heard regularly calling to one another.

February—Mr. J. W. Mellor says This month more birds have been breeding, the operation having been delayed over the spring on account of the drought.

Southern White-plumed Honey-eaters (*Ptilotula penicillata whitei*) have been safely reared in the nest near my museum window, and are being fed by the parent birds.

The two young hatched out on February 6, and left the nest on February 20. Thus it took seven days to build the nest, six days to complete laying, etc, thirteen days in incubation, and fourteen days rearing the young, the whole operation from start to finish taking five weeks five days.

The Noisy Minahs have been extremely lively and garrulous, especially during the hot spells of weather, and quite a number come to drink at the water tap, and from a tin of cold water which I always keep beneath a shady tree near the back door of the house. It is surprising the number of birds of all kinds, especially honey eaters, that come to drink from this vessel, and the quantity of water supplied to them.

The More-pocks or Boobook Owls have been somewhat quiet: at night during the month, but the delicate or screech owls of which there are quite a number about, have continued to call loudly. One bird roosts by day right at the back door in a large lemon scented pine. Amongst the thick foliage it is hidden from view from beneath, but not so from above, as the white-plumed honey eaters and noisy miners soon found it out, and all day long- make a perfect babel of voice-, up among the branches of the pine. The owl seems to heed them but little, and calmly sleeps on, now and again blinking its eyes, but otherwise remaining motionless.

Numbers of purple crowned lorikeets have been about at Lockleys all the month, flying swiftly about or settling in the

eucalypts that are now ,flowering, and getting a good supply of nectar from the flowers.

At Fulham a pair of wood swallows (*Pseudartamus eyanopterus*) built their nest in some tea trees and laid four eggs during the month the young left the nest in safety, since when they have been perching in a row on the branches of the trees, or sitting on the telephone or electric light wires, receiving their food from the parent birds. They seem to have a tendency to "cluster," for at night and often in the day, when it became cold they would huddle together with the parent Birds, on some limb of a tree, convenient fork or bough. Several young peaceful doves (*Geopelia placida tranquila*) have also hatched out at Fulham.