

—July, 1922.—

By J. W. Mellor.

The Magpies have been extremely energetic with their building operations, and in consequence have become very aggressive.

Red-backed Grass Parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*) have remained with us, and from their manner seem to intend staying on indefinitely.

White-fronted Herons (*Notophoxa novae-hollandiae*) are now nesting in the red gums.

The Flame-breasted Robin (*Littleria chrysoptera phoenicea*) is still with us, and on July 4 I noted several in the open paddocks.

On July 6 I noted half a dozen Red-backed Grass Parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*) on the boxthorn bushes feeding on the berries and seeds of the African boxthorn. This proves

them to be a decided acquisition, as the Parrot does not swallow the berry whole, but breaks it to pieces with its bill, destroying the seeds before swallowing, and thus preventing the seed from germinating when it has passed through its digestive organs. In this respect they differ from the European Starling, which spreads the boxthorn over the country more than all other species of birds.

A very notable find this month is the Southern Grass Bird (*Poodytes gramineus dubius*).

On July 6 I heard its well-known call of "pee-pee-e" and "pee-pee-pee-ee," for, I have always stated, it makes a three-note call as well as a two-note. The little bird and its mate were in the thick cover of the boxthorn, and all through the month it has been heard within a hundred yards of the same spot. In all probability it will stay to breed. These little friends we used to call the little Reed-bird in the early days, as they were as numerous as the ordinary Reed-bird (*Conopoderas australis*), and their nests were always found in similar situations amongst the swamps and attached to the tall reeds growing in the water. Their nests were well known, as they always placed feathers in the rim and domed them above in the form of a little arch, and blue Bald-Cock feathers with a curve in them were almost always used, and the curved side placed inwards, as if the birds knew something of architecture.

On July 13 a Rose-breasted Cockatoo (*Ecolophus roseicapillus*) was seen flying about in the big gums and making itself quite at home.

On July 15 noted several Spur-wing Plovers (*Lobibyr novaeollandiae*) near some swampy ground at Lockleys, and next day a pair of Black-breasted Plovers (*Zonifer tricolor*) flew over, uttering their loud sharp calls, but did not settle near at hand.

On July 19 found that a White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca leuconota*) had nearly finished building its nest quite close to the house and only about 10 or 12 feet from the ground, on the bough of a Norfolk Island pine. One of the old birds was just putting a beakful of hair into the bottom as a lining, and a pair of Willy Wagtails were greatly perturbed, as it was their usual tree for nesting. They were trying to frighten the Magpie away by pecking and flying at it incessantly, but without avail. I expect the Wagtail will have to leave the pine this year and nest elsewhere.

Another new find for Mellor Park on the 19th was the Southern Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cuculata vigorsii*). It was quietly sitting on a low twig of a bush near the garden, and

from the way in which it was at times flitting to and fro I should say that its mate was not far away in the bushes. It is surprising the variety of birds one sees about where the locality has been kept in its natural state and rigid protection accorded to the birds that come along.