

Ornithological Notes.

By J. W. Mellor, "Mellor Park," Lockleys, S.A.

AUGUST, 1925.

During the month the birds were very active indeed, apparently preparing for the general nesting. On the 1st I noted some of my old friends the Red-rumped Grass-Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*) in the back paddocks in the Gumtrees. I also noticed a pair of the Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*), that have been about for a long while, going in and out of a hollow in a big Redgum-tree, evidently contemplating nesting. On the 2nd the Nankeen Kestrels (*Cerchneis cenchroides*) were also "eyeing" a hollow in a Gumtree not far away. On the 3rd a pair of Pallid Cuckoos (*Cuculus pallidus*) were chasing each other, and each calling in their respective notes. On this date I also noted a pair of White-fronted Herons (*Notophox novae-hollandiae*) at the river at the top of the paddocks, they were in a big Gum, and looked as though mated for nesting. A pair of Murray Magpies (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) I noted busy in building their mud nest at the front gate, in a tall Redgum-tree, right near the main road. On the 6th my attention was drawn to a peculiar note oft repeated as a bird was flying swiftly overhead amongst the big trees in the back paddock. The note seemed familiar, and upon investigation I found it was nothing more or less than a poor old Rock-Pebbler Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*). It came circling round the tree-tops several times, and I was hoping that it had come to stay, but within a quarter of an hour or less it made a bee-line southward and disappeared in the distance. It was apparently on a migratory stunt, as it did not appear to be a caged bird. On the 10th I saw the largest number of Galahs that I have ever seen at one time at Lockleys. A regular flock, numbering twenty in all, swept down from aloft and took possession of the old Gumtrees, and there was quite a clatter of voices for the time being, but these also passed on, after having rested a while. On the 13th the pair of Crested Pigeons (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) that nested in a Bluegum-tree in front of the house brought off their young, and could be seen feeding them near the lawn. Moreporks, or Boobook Owls (*Ninox boobook*), have been about, and on the 17th were calling persistently and loudly at night, sounding as though making their love calls to one another. The same night several Banded Plovers (*Zonifer tricolor*) were flying over, and calling loudly. On the 21st a Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) was making his presence felt in the back paddocks, and the birds

generally were much perturbed, and chattering and calling as the Falcon flew swiftly here and there. On the 24th several old Crows or Ravens flew over, paying a short visit, and reminded me of earlier days, when they were about with us in numbers, but they, like many other birds, are now only occasional visitors, and their stay only of short duration. The same night the five Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) that nest quite near at hand, were calling continuously in their low mournful cooing notes. On the 30th several "Barking Snipe," or White-headed Stilts (*Himantopus leucocephalus*), were heard calling in their peculiar dog-like way, in little yelps, as they flew over towards the swamps at the Reedbeds. On the last day of the month I picked up the hatched-out eggshell of the Murray Magpies near the front gate, showing that the old birds had successfully got their family going. The Black-headed or Noisy Minahs (*Myzantha garrula*) have been very "outspoken," and quarrelsome during the month, doubtless caused through now having their young both in the nests and also flying about, and they did not "mince matters" in letting the other birds know it. On one occasion I noted them giving a European Blackbird a bad time. Several Minahs set at him, and pursued him through bushes and sticks, ever and anon pecking him, pulling feathers out by the beakful, until the Blackbird sang out as if for help, and became quite exhausted, but eventually beat a retreat into some low thick bushes. On another occasion the Minahs set on to a Rosella Parrot (*Platycercus eximius*), and made the parrot call out in both anger and pain, as they attacked it, and in due course drove it from the locality.

SEPTEMBER, 1925.

September has been a quieter month on the whole, the birds having settled down to their nesting tasks, and many having their young are too busy to move about any distance. I was surprised to see a Major Mitchell or Pink Cockatoo about in the Gumtrees, and made calls to the one that I have in captivity, they seemed to have quite an interchange of notes, and later the visitor departed. On the 3rd September there were quite a number of Red-rumped Grass-Parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*) about, also a few Rosella Parrots (*Platycercus eximius*). On the 12th I never saw so many European Greenfinches about before as on that day. They were in company with a few Sparrows and a number of Goldfinches and some Starlings, but the Greenfinches were in hundreds flying up from the ground amongst the low bushes, and settling on the boxthorn bushes, and uttering their peculiar "whirring" notes. In the bushes

in the back paddock I saw several Yellow-rumped Tits (*Geobasileus chrysorrhous*) in the boxthorn bushes not far from where the introduced birds were congregated. These little Tits are not plentiful now as in the early days, when you could see them every day and everywhere if cover was handy for them. On the 17th a few Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) came about, but did not stay long with us. This day a Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*) came into the stockyard on the ground. It was an old bird, and had apparently been blown down by the rough weather. It stayed in a low bush during the day and flew towards night. The Morepork Owl (*Ninox boobook*) that generally roosts in the stable on the rafters, but which has been absent for a little time presumably attending to nesting operations, seems to have been also "blown down" with the stormy conditions, as he was sitting on his old rafter for the day, but departed when the weather fined up. Heard the call of the Nankeen Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) on the 23rd. It was quite familiar, as they were so plentiful in the big Gums in the early days. Next day the presence of the Brush Wattle-Birds (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*) was revealed by the birds' hoarse and loud notes, as they flew about in the thick bushes, but they did not stay. On the 26th several Pipits, or Ground-Larks (*Anthus australis*), came under my notice in the open paddocks, while several Galahs made their presence known in the big Gums overhead. It is a long time since I have heard the calls of the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) so continuously repeated, week after week since their arrival with us, as during this season they seem to have come and made up their minds to stay.

OCTOBER, 1925.

On the 5th of October I noted the Little Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*) about in the trees. It is not a general rule for it to be here, but it is always to be found in the Mt. Lofty Ranges. On the 14th seven Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*) came flying over just at dusk, keeping in line as they flew, and "trumpeting" as they proceeded on their way over the paddocks. On the 22nd I saw nine Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*). They settled in a Gumtree in the back paddock, and were making a loud screeching noise as they "talked" to one another. The Galahs seem to have taken quite a liking to the big paddocks and the fine old gnarled Gums at "Mellor Park," for they are nearly always to be seen seeking their food in the boughs, or searching amongst the Scotch Thistles on the ground, where the seeds have fallen amongst the grass. Striped Diamond-Birds (*Pardalotus striatus*) have been very busy about in the trees all the month.

I think that they have bred this season in small holes in the old trees. Their familiar call of "Chucky-chuck" is often heard in the paddocks. On the 28th quite a number of the Masked Wood-Swallows (*Artamus personatus*) and the White-browed Wood-Swallows (*A. superciliosus*) arrived at Lockleys and seemed to drop from the air and take up their quarters in the trees, calling repeatedly to one another as they sat on the boughs or flew from twig to twig. On the 30th a Singing Honey-eater (*Meliphaga virescens*) was noted in the African boxthorn bushes, eating the berries and making its double-note call. I also saw a Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascinans*) in the fruit-trees, calling sweetly to its mate; doubtless they are nesting. In the evening of the 30th I heard the notes of the Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*) as it flew over the paddocks towards the west, going doubtless to the swamps for food.