

Ornithological Notes.

By J. W. Mellor, Lockleys.

—November, 1925.—

November has been a very active month amongst the birds. Many young ones have come out, and feeding has been going on wherever one happened to go. On the first day of the month I noted a family of Black-and-white Fantails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) that had just left the nest. Although these birds are about in certain local places, I have not noted many young ones this season—the cats may have accounted for this. I was also pleased to find that the White-fronted Herons (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*) had brought out their brood of young in one of the big gums, and these during the month left the nest, and have been about with the parent birds. The two Laughing Jacks (*Dacelo gigas*) have selected a tree in my neighbour's garden, and have hatched out their three young. These, towards the end of the month, have become very noisy, and it takes all that the parent birds can do to satisfy their wants. Fortunately my neighbour is a protectionist. He told me that any mice or big worms or grubs that he finds while going about his daily toil he saves and throws up to the hole in the tree, and the young Jacks appreciate his thoughtfulness by having a squabble to see who will get the tit-bits first. On the 1st I was pleased to hear the singing of the Rufous

Song-Lark (*Cincloramphus mathewsi*). On the 3rd. I heard the notes of the Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*). It was perched on a tree near the house, and I heard it on several occasions later in the month. On the 5th I noted several Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoos (*Chalcites basalis*) about. On the 7th I was pleased to hear the pretty little notes of the Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) calling "Collywhop, collywhop," and after a while I located the bird on a dry twig of a gumtree. A mate was handy, I have no doubt, for I have since heard the calling, so hope that they will stay and breed, as they used to do some years ago. Another "find" on the same day was that of a pair of White-shouldered Caterpillar-eaters (*Campephaga tricolor*). They were flying about the vines and fruit-trees, and by the actions of the female I concluded that they had a nest somewhere handy, although I did not locate it. On the 12th another female was seen in the back paddocks, at some distance from the place noted a few days previously, showing that there were more than the nesting pair of these birds about. While walking along the river-bank on the same day I flushed a Rufous Song-Lark (*Cincloramphus mathewsi*). These birds used to be quite plentiful, but now are only occasionally seen. A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) came about on the 12th, and flew into the redgums which the Galahs frequent. The loud screeching of this bird attracted the attention of the Cockatoo I have in captivity, and a "conversation" took place between them at a distance. On the 15th I saw the first young birds of the season of the European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) being fed by the parent birds. On the same day I paid a visit to Fulham, and near the swampy land saw quite a number of birds. Dusky Wood-Swallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*) were about in the trees, and appeared to be mating. Several Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*) were calling loudly in the fresh long grass, and a Large Song-Lark (*Cincloramphus cruralis*) went soaring up and calling loudly. On a dead tree near some water a White-fronted Heron (*Notophoxyx novae-hollandiae*) was perched, and at a not far distant range a Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*) was giving its warning call. A small flock of Common Grey Teal (*Virago gibberifrons*) was flying over the swamps, and in a clump of gumtrees a Common Crow was uttering his cawing notes. On the 21st a Port Lincoln Parrot (*Barnardius zonarius*) came about the house. Next day some Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) were flying about in small lots, and making a loud screeching sound. On the 26th Singing Honey-eaters (*Meliphaga virescens*) were noted in the boxthorn bushes on the red sandhills eating the red berries. On

the 29th some Yellow-winged Honey-eaters (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*) were chasing each other in the native bluegums near the house, and since then they have been about in the thick foliage, and calling loudly while sucking honey from the flowers. The weather warmed up, and numbers of Musk Lorikeets invaded the trees, screeching and making a great noise as they flew hither and thither in small parties. There were also a few Blue Mountain Parrots (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) with them, also screeching as hard as they could. Their rendezvous was in the big Morton Bay figtrees near the house, and the screaming and screeching was perfectly deafening. As I stood beneath these giant trees the noise of the birds and the heat of the day reminded me of tropical Queensland. I peered through the foliage to try to see the birds, but their colour and shape so nearly resembled the leaves that it was only when the birds shifted that they could be made out.

—December, 1925.—

It is pleasing to watch the White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) come and enjoy a shower-bath while the sprinkler is going on the front lawn. The Noisy Miners (*Myzantha garrula*) that are about in goodly numbers also like to come and have a wash in the same spray. On 14th December numbers of Lorikeets came about, the Musk Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta concinna*) being most plentiful. There were also some Purple-crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*). On the 18th I found the White-plumed Honey-eater (*Meliphaga penicillata*) with young. On the 22nd I noted a Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*) on the ground during the day-time, where it stayed until dark, and then flew away. These birds have nested in the trees close by, and night after night their "Moo-moo-moo" calls have been heard. Their low, mournful dirge is very different from that of the Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*), and there is no mistaking one for the other.

—January, 1926.—

During the month Lorikeets have been about in numbers, the Musk being more plentiful than the Purple-crowned. They seem to feed principally on the honey from the eucalypts, but at times they make a raid on the apple-trees and do damage. There have been a few Blue Mountain or Rainbow Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) about. Red Wattle-birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) have been very plentiful, their harsh, guttural notes sounding very loud amongst the big trees. I noted that the food of the Noisy Miner (*Myzantha garrula*)

consists largely of African boxthorn berries, on which they also feed their young. On New Year's Day I saw the Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) flying swiftly across the paddocks, to the discomfiture of the smaller birds, who, making their alarm calls quickly made for cover. Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Græcalus novae-hollandiæ*) have been about all the month. I noted them first on the 2nd, and they have been calling loudly to each other in their usual "curring" notes. I have seen these birds eating olives at times, but the few they eat do not amount to much, and they are not really destructive birds. At times they pick an olive from the outstanding branches while on the wing, swooping along and snapping at the berry with their beaks, and then fly to some convenient tree to eat it. On the 6th I noted the Black- and -white Fantail, or Willie-Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) with young, this being probably a second brood. On the 9th I saw the Noisy Miners (*Myzantha garrula*), which are now quite numerous with us all the year round, making a meal on the ground, and on going close up and watching I found that they were eating the large black sawfly grubs that denude the gumtrees of the foliage. These larvae stick to the gumtrees in small balls, and when disturbed squirt out a nasty-smelling fluid. The birds generally leave them alone, and in consequence they breed and multiply very fast, but I am happy to say that our friends the Miners attack them, the *modus operandi* of "preparing" them for the meal being to rub the grub vigorously and continuously on the ground until it was well pulverized and then swallow it whole.

—February, 1926.—

Quite an influx of birds has taken place during the month, owing doubtless to the long dry season that we have had in the far northern areas. Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) have been very plentiful, and have been attacking the fruit, especially pears and apples, and have been paying the penalty for their misdeeds. The Purple-crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*) have been present in less numbers, but have confined their food to the honey from the flowers of the eucalypts. The Common Wattle-Birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) also have been about in large numbers. They have been eating fruit also, more especially the soft kinds, such as grapes, plums, etc. Noisy Miners (*Myzantha garrula*) are now always with us, but their numbers seem to have increased considerably of late. They live to a large extent on insects, which they catch while on the wing. Wattle-Birds also relish insect titbits, and at evening I have watched them sallying forth from the tops of the old

gumtrees, several at a time, catch their insect each, and return to the treetop to eat them. The Noisy Miners are still nesting; as I noted a bird flying with some nesting material the other day and enter a gumtree to start building. On the 10th February I noted a Rock Pebbler Parrot (*Polytelis anthropeplus*) flying about in the big gums. It was calling loudly in its usual native notes. On the 9th I saw a Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) near the house, cooing softly as to its mate, but I did not get a glance of another bird there. On the same day Singing Honey-eaters (*Meliphaga virescens*) were about, calling in their usual short loud notes. On the same day several Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Graucalus novae-hollandiae*) were searching for food. In addition to insect food, they like berries, such as olives, boxthorn, and mulberries. A Ring-neck Parrot (*Barnardius barnardi*) was flying about the trees on the 20th. On the 22nd a loud and long musical song from the top of a large Moreton Bay figtree enabled me to locate an Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*). These birds occasionally visit us, but are by no means common, and as I have heard their sweet, liquid, warbling notes on several occasions lately I presume the birds are staying with us for a time, at any rate. The Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) are always with us in the trees around the house, making their low cooing sound, which resembles the cooing of a pigeon, sounding like "Moo-moo-moo" repeated for a number of times quite soft and low. These birds are quite tame, and will let you get quite close to them while they are calling. The principal "calling" time is in the spring, but even now they are occasionally heard.