

Unusual Visitors to "Wittunga," Blackwood.

By Edwin Ashby.

The Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*) put in an appearance as soon as the seeds of *Acacia Baileyana*, the Cootamundra wattle, were ripening, and stayed till near Christmas, when three examples of the Bush Bronzewing (*Phaps elegans*) for the first time in our experience visited the garden. One of the

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three met with some mishap. I noticed it apparently wounded one day and tried to catch it, but was not successful, and later on found its remains; it was a bird of this season. The other two continued with us till the first week in March, but I have not noticed them since; they became very tame, and would allow me, if careful, to watch them at the distance of a few yards. The other Bronzewing seems to resent the intruders and have not been noted for months.

On 26th October, 1931, my son, Mr. Keith Ashby, noted a flock of *Neophema* in the orchard, and on the same date one stayed feeding all day amongst my native shrubs. It certainly was the Elegant Parrot (*N. elegans*). From time to time we have seen probably the same small flock. Six or seven were noticed as late as 5th February. This is the first time we have recorded this *Neophema* at "Wittunga."

On 27th February, 1932, great numbers of ants were swarming just outside our fence; the ants were issuing continuously for quite a long period. They were probably all winged females with large bodies half-an-inch long; their flight was very laboured and slow. These attracted numbers of birds—Dusky Wood-Swallows, Honeyeaters of several species, the Brown Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Fairy and Tree Martins, and others including Sparrows. I wished I had been at liberty to watch them and tabulate notes. The different methods of catching their prey were most notable. I think the Sparrows were the clumsiest, whilst the Wood-Swallows never missed their kill. I do not know how long the ants were issuing, but I think well over an hour, and I doubt whether any really got away; the birds perched on the telephone wires that were exactly over the bank from which the ants issued.
