
McGILP—*The Barn, or Delicate, Owl.*

The Barn or Delicate Owl.

(*Tyto alba*).

By J. Neil McGilp.

During the many years that I resided at Moolawatana Station, north-east of Copley, S.A., I observed very few Delicate Owls, and only once located a nest which contained five young birds. In 1918 I was informed on good authority that these Owls were common and breeding freely in the trees in Callabonna Creek, a distance of about 28 miles northerly from Hamilton Creek upon which Moolawatana homestead is situated. The aborigines were eating the Owls' eggs. For the following two years my brother paid visits to Callabonna Creek, and though he carefully searched a good length of the Creek no nest was found. The Owls had left the district. This season (1931) these Owls have been very numerous in the Hamilton Creek. The Manager of Moolawatana Station, Mr. Rex McKay, has reported a good many nests with eggs, as many as seven eggs being found in a hollow. There was no lining, the eggs resting on wood dust. He also instances a nest containing six fluffy white chicks on a platform across a well at a depth of about 30 feet from ground surface. The parent bird flew up out of the well as Mr. McKay was going down the ladder to pack the rod-box gland. The young were huddled together in a slight depression close to the side of the well. Mr. McKay this week, 7/12/31, reports that young Owls are everywhere in suitable hollows in gumtrees growing in the Creek. This "epidemic" of Delicate Owls is surprising in view of my observations over many years. It is possible that food supplies have caused the Owls to congregate and nest in this locality, as they did in 1918 in Callabonna Creek. Both seasons were very good in the district. From the foregoing it would appear that the Delicate Owl congregates during nesting periods. Can any reader substantiate this conjecture?
