

CAIN—Nesting Notes.

Nesting Notes in the Port Augusta District.

By Walter Cain.

The winter of 1933 will be recorded as an abnormally dry one in this District. It was not until the copious rains at the close of August that our birds began to nest. We registered $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches of rain at the end of August, almost equal to the rainfall from 1st March to that date. Some birds usually here in normal times are absentees, noticeably amongst which are Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*), Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*), Barn-Owl (*Tyto alba*), Cockatiel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*), and Shell Parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*); whilst amongst birds found nesting restrictive clutches have been very common. With the *Corvidae* that has been particularly noticeable, many nests contained a single egg, whilst twos were commoner, the only two normal clutches of four eggs each were seen at Euro Bluff, where a bird secured proved to be a Crow (*Corvus cecillae*). Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*) nested freely in September, but in no instance have I seen the species with a second clutch, a common practice with them in normal seasons. The nesting of Mulga Parrots (*Psephotus varius*) and Blue Bonnets (*Psephotus haematogaster*) was extremely light, and the birds were some six weeks later than the usual time. Blue Bonnets were recorded in flocks in the scrubs throughout the nesting season. Species recorded as nesting during the season were:—Emu (*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*), Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*), Australian Dotterel (*Peltohyas australis*), White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*), Grey Teal (*Querquedula gibberifrons*), Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*), Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus*

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audax), Whistling Eagle, Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*), Black Falcon (*F. subniger*), Nankeen Kestrel (*F. cenchroides*), White Cockatoo (*Kakatoe galerita*), Bare-eyed Cockatoo (*K. sanguinea*), Galah (*K. roseicapilla*), Cockatiel—only two pairs seen, Mallee Parrot (*Barnardius barnardi*), Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*), Mulga Parrot, Blue Bonnet, Elegant Parrot (*Neophema elegans*), Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Owlet Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristata*), Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), White-backed Swallows (*Cheramoeca leucosterna*), Tree-Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*), Wedgebill (*Sphenostoma cristatum*), White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*), White-fronted Chat (*Epthanura albifrons*), Crimson Chat (*E. tricolor*), Orange Chat (*E. aurifrons*). The visitation of all three species of Chats was light. Turquoise Wren (*Malurus callainus*), Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*), Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*), Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*), Pipit (*Anthus australis*), and Crow.

In a letter, dated 15th December, he advised:—"Conditions on the Nullarbor Plain are exceedingly dry, even right through to the western end. There is no bird-life there at present, and one asks in perplexity, 'Where have all the birds gone?' At the western end wild cats (or tame cats gone wild) are causing great concern. No less than 30 of these pests were taken by poison and trap at one camp between Naretha and Parkeston. At 'Warrakimbo' (near Port Augusta), too, we have had them, and they have played up with the Little Corellas' (*Kakatoe sanguinea*) nesting. In some cases the parent bird was killed and eaten in the hollow whilst sitting on the eggs, in others the nestlings were eaten, the claw marks of the cats showing on the bark of the trees. Great rain has fallen here and filled up some of the swamps. At one place it did a lot of damage to nesting. Many of the hollows were filled with water, and young Parrots were drowned, even heavily incubated eggs were washed out of the hollows to the ground. The Princess Alexandra Parrot (*Polytelis alexandrae*) has appeared in fair numbers near Abminga, S.A., and nested. It is 28 years since they were last there."