
McGILP—A Rare Cuckoo Combination.

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By J. Neil McGilp.

On the 14th September, 1933, in company with Messrs. J. A. Ross, F. E. Parsons, R. G. Ribbons, and K. O'Connor, the writer was searching a patch of mallee and porcupine-grass (*Triodia*) country north-east of Bolton's Crabhole, Victoria, in the hope that nests of the Mallee Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus mallee*) might be located. Keith O'Connor called to us that he had found a Striated Grass-Wren's (*Amytornis striatus*) nest, and upon examination a single egg of the Horsfield (Narrow-billed) Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*) was seen in the nest. The spot was carefully marked, and as the nest had not been touched or interfered with in any way we expected to secure a very rare combination clutch a few days later. In 1932 Messrs. Ross and Bunn in the parish of Manya found a similar set, but the Cuckoo's egg was too far advanced in incubation to allow of a specimen being made of it. That was the first record of this combination, and it is noteworthy that in the following season another set was taken in practically the same locality. Mr. Ribbons accompanied by Mr. Ross, at the request of the party, returned to the locality on the 20th September, 1933, and took a beautiful set of two eggs of the Striated Grass-Wren in combination with one egg of the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo.

The nest was made of porcupine and some other grass. It was a dome-shaped structure with rather a straggly hood over the entrance, which was proportionally large, and allowed the eggs to be seen without touching the entrance. The nest was lined with the flowers of the porcupine-grass, which were matted

together, forming almost a felt-like lining. The nest was placed at a height of about a foot from the ground, in and near the top of a small porcupine clump, and was well concealed. No signs of the birds were noted on 14th September, but the bird flushed from the nest on the 20th September.

This clutch—so far as the writer is aware, the only one in existence—is now in the “McGillp Collection” in the South Australian Museum.

It is worthy of note that the Cuckoo's egg was the first egg deposited in this nest. The writer has long been of opinion, after much experience with Cuckoo's eggs, that the foster parent's eggs are almost invariably laid after the Cuckoo's egg has been placed in the nest. It is true that there are records of eggs of Cuckoos having been added to eggs of the foster parents, but I am inclined to think that is “the exception that proves the rule” (or custom). In most cases the Cuckoo's egg hatches out before the eggs of the foster parent. The writer has not yet had the fortune to find a Cuckoo's egg added to a clutch, but has records of a good many Cuckoos' eggs in the nest before any foster parents' eggs were laid, and he has never been able to find foster parents' eggs thrown out of the nest, except after the young Cuckoo has been at work.

A nest of the Mallee Emu-Wren containing three eggs was taken from the locality at a later date.
