
PEARSE—Florieton Notes.

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By N. Hiles Pearse.

13th December, 1934.—Whilst motoring through a boundary gate, with the temperature at 102 degrees in the shade, I flushed two Banded Plovers (*Zonifer tricolor*) from the shade of a gatepost. The female promptly crouched down, and upon investigation I saw their three tiny young ones, just fledged, and running along. They also squatted down and allowed me to pick them up. This must be an unusually late brood, due, no doubt, to the mild summer. On the same date a single specimen of the Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*) was observed, and five Red-rumped Parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*), two males and three females, were seen perched on the rim of a 5,000-gallon open tank. As they were obviously thirsty they allowed me to get within a few feet of them. The water was below their reach, so I placed a piece of wood in the tank and they immediately flew on to it and quenched their thirst.

15th December, 1934.—Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*). We were fortunate enough to have a nice lot of hay in a dry lagoon

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this season; Galahs soon found it out when it was ripe, and did considerable damage, both standing and in the stook. The hay was carted five miles and stacked near the homestead. You can imagine our surprise when we found that the birds had followed it. One morning early, when the writer went out to the stack, he found it literally studded with Galahs, like cloves sticking out of the Christmas ham.

3rd January, 1935.—Hearing the tame Turkeys making their peculiar crooning cry, with their heads on one side with such a quizzical expression, I looked up and saw a magnificent specimen of a Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*) soaring over at an altitude of about 3,000 feet. On 4th January, when returning from the mail in the car, I passed within 20 yards of a fine specimen of this Eagle sitting on a post. It did not deign to move. Only once have I observed a Wedge-tailed Eagle strike down a fox. I was motoring across very flat open grass country, and saw a fox about a mile ahead—the mirage magnifies objects very much in this type of country—then of a sudden I noted an Eagle drop with wings closed, as they always do when striking, from a great height. It dropped diagonally at great speed, and when I reached the spot where I had last seen the fox the bird flew off. The fox was quite dead, scalped cleanly and weltering in blood. I think that Eagle must have been very hungry, as a fox is an ugly customer to tackle, unless taken unawares like this one, by a veritable “bolt from the blue.”

15th January, 1935.—Our high bath tank has a small leak, and the hollow that the drip has worn in the ground makes an ideal bird bath. A number of birds disport themselves in it: Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Striped Honeyeaters (*Plectorhyncha lanceolata*), and White-browed Babblers (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*). The Striped Honeyeater is very partial to fruit, particularly apricots.

20th January, 1935.—We have been doing a considerable amount of rabbit-burrow ploughing to destroy the pest lately, and quite a number of rabbits get shut out of the holes. After a day or so the contractor had a real retinue of carnivorous birds following him from burrow to burrow—Eagles (*sp.*), Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*), smaller Hawks, and Crows (*Corvus sp.*). It is surprising what a number of rabbits they have destroyed. With regard to birds destroying fruit, Crows are as destructive as any other species. They soon denude an apricot tree, half-eating the fruit, knocking it down

and fouling it. This season has proved to me that fruit is an acquired taste as far as these birds are concerned, as they have repeatedly left the big gums, where they roost, and passed over the trees laden with yellow fruit, to visit the paddocks, where the grasshoppers have been present in great numbers. Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) also have paid but fleeting visits to the mulberries and figs, which they are so fond of ordinarily, since the "hoppers" came. In my opinion, as far as grasshopper-destruction is concerned, Starlings come first (because of their greater numbers), then Crows, Magpies (*Gymnorhina sp.*), Wood-Swallows (*Artamus sp.*), and Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). The opportunities of the last-named are somewhat limited, being homestead birds they have to wait for the "hoppers" to come to them.
