

Nesting on Some of the Islands in the Coorong.

By Warren B. Hitchcock.

On the 12th January, 1937, the Fairy Terns (*Sterna nereis*) were found nesting on Trevarrow's Island—the water in the Coorong at this date had receded considerably, and one could easily walk from the mainland shore to this island, the water being about a foot at the deepest place. There were two colonies on this island, the larger being at the north-west corner. This ternery was roughly thirty by fifteen feet, and the majority of the "scrapes" were placed in the shelter of a stone, stick, or some piece of vegetation. The remainder of the nests, however, were out in the open and the eggs or young were admirably protected by their similarity to their surroundings. There were nineteen nests with two eggs each, eleven with one egg each, and three with an egg and a chick each, five with one chick each, four with two eggs each and four eggs lying about on the ground, as well as numerous empty "scrapes." I saw only one fish in this

colony and it was a young mullet, about two inches in length. I noticed birds diving for fish in the shallow water at the shore-line. The fish is carried crosswise in the bill and the bird flies near the surface of the water when returning to its mate. An average nest measures four inches in diameter by .8 inch deep. The Terns constantly "stooped" like Plovers do. Another smaller ternery was located on a sand-ridge on the eastern side of the island. There were six nests with two eggs each, seven with one egg each, and one empty "scrape" (there were two eggs in this on 14th). One of these nests containing one egg was a large scoop in the sand about a foot in diameter. Other birds seen on and around this island were:—Eleven Pied Oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*), one Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), one Crested Tern (*Sterna bergii*), three Red-capped Dotterels (*Charadrius ruficapillus*), three White-fronted Chats (*Epthianura albifrons*), and two Singing Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga virescens*). Rabbits were numerous on this island.

On 17th January there were twenty young in the larger colony and four dead chicks, which were squashed flat. There was none dead on 14th. In one nest there was a chick in white down (the younger) and the other chick in brown down. In the smaller colony there were (on 17th) eight nests with two eggs each, nine with an egg each, and two with a chick each—one in white down, the other in brown.

Pelican Islands.

On 19th January, 1937, two of the Pelican Islands were visited. On the largest island there were two posts, one at each end of the island, which were the only remains of the notices erected by the Fisheries and Game Department. I found one of the notice-boards lying at the water's edge.

Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) only were nesting on this island and were congregated about the north-west corner. Nests near the shore-line contained well-feathered young almost ready to leave the nest; further up on the land the nests held naked young, which barked like young puppy-dogs, and just over the rise there were many nests with eggs, mostly two egg-clutches. In the centre of the island there were six nests placed on rough earth—five with two eggs each, and one with an egg and a chick. Most of the parent birds did not fly away while I was inspecting the colony, but waddled over to the southern end of the island and stood there like a battalion of soldiers. There must have been upwards of 300 nests in all. Some of the larger young, which could not fly, stumbled and struggled on their tarso-metatarsi (and using their wings as a help) to the water's edge,

where they soon reached safety by swimming. I did not see a fish amongst all these Pelicans' nests.

There were about 800 Pelicans in all on and about the main nesting island. This estimate was approximate, as it was very difficult to count them. I estimated most of their number while they were in a body at one end of the island, and added to that number those that were in the water. There were one dead adult, and three or four dead young ones in various stages of maturity.

On an adjoining islet numbers of Pied Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax varius*) were nesting in some species of scrubby bush. There were three nests with four eggs each, fourteen with three eggs each, ten with two eggs each, four with one egg each; many nests with young, the majority of which contained three young in all stages of growth. Some of the nests held both young and eggs. The young birds were very restless. The only fish seen was a mullet about a foot in length in a nest containing two young and an egg. There were also five nesting sites of the Pelican on the ground without a semblance of a nest—four with an egg each, and the other with a young naked bird and an egg. A flock of Silver Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) hovered around the Pied Cormorants' nests, but did not steal anything while I was there.

Other birds seen on or around these two islands were:—Eighteen *Corvus* sp., four Pied Oystercatchers, Silver Gulls, three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Brodia acuminata*), a Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), five Spur-winged Plovers (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*), and two Fairy Terns were fishing in the vicinity. I did not see rabbits, or signs of rabbits, on either of these islands.
