

Unusual Nests.

By J. Neil McGilp.

I visited Mr. Simon Harvey's fine flight aviary on 20th October, 1937, and was very interested in seeing a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*) sitting on a nest in which Mr. Harvey said there were two eggs. The nest was not suspended nor built in the usual style by the weaving of tendrils and fine grasses and the use of much cobweb, and, when

available, fibres of wool. The nest was constructed of dried grass only, and was wedged in a stout fork, and the whole looked a very substantial structure, quite unlike that generally built. The birds had no doubt been unable to find any cobweb or woolly material to mat the usual materials together.

Mr. Harvey showed me a few nests of the Painted Finch (*Emblema picta*), one nest closely resembled that of the Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola sagittata*), in that it was in a depression in the ground; the fine grass had been woven together over the depression, which appeared to have been made by the birds, and some short pieces of grass formed a lining on which four eggs rested. The grass was bleached, and the nest was a pale-looking affair. Other nests were constructed in Finch-like manner, in clumps of fine brush which had been placed by Mr. Harvey in an open porch in order to encourage the birds to nest. I was greatly struck by seeing that the birds had carried quite a large quantity of small gravel into the brush, and that a substantial platform had been made; on this the nest had been built. In a box provided for the birds quite a handful of fine pebbles and gravel had been placed, and on these the birds had just constructed a base for the eggs. In another cigar-box more pebbles are present, and the birds give indications of nesting there. These habits are interesting, for I have never seen the use of gravel mentioned in nesting notes—few indeed are recorded—in connection with this beautifully-gowned species; nor, on the other hand, have I seen reference to the birds nesting on the ground.

It would be interesting to know if other aviculturists have noted these habits, and also if such are customary in the birds' natural state.

The Painted Finch is a Central Australian resident, albeit somewhat nomadic in character; they have been recorded by the writer to come down as far south as Lake Frome. Remarkably little information is available about this beautiful Finch.

On the other hand the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater is common almost everywhere in the State. I have seen hundreds of nests, but none has been built in a fork, and all have been a suspended, rather deep, structure, of cobweb and fine rootlets or tendrils.