

Florieton Notes.

By N. Hiles Pearse. 26th August, 1938.

Every day the following birds turn up without fail for scraps from the meat-house:—Two Brown Hawks (*Falco berigora*), five Kookaburras (*Dacelo gigas*), one Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*), two Magpie-Larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), one Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*), one Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*), and four Black-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*). Several Crows (*Corvus* sp.) appear, too, but I drive them away, as I consider them the only mean birds of the feather kingdom. Although it is only a natural instinct for them to remove the eyes of fallen sheep whilst alive, I do not like it. I would rather have the Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*), whom I consider a noble bird. The smaller birds are not always regular, and seem to appear from curiosity as they only now and then pick up small bits of fat. The Brown Hawks and Kookaburras occupy telephone-poles near the house, the latter even sitting in under the tank on a tank-stand; and the Magpies perch on adjacent sugar-gumtrees. The Kookaburras wait until a Magpie picks up a piece of meat and down they come flop right on top of the Magpie, scolding angrily. They always win. The Hawks also drive off the Magpies and often take their share. I saw one of the Hawks do a clever piece of work only yesterday. A Magpie was feeding on a piece of meat, the Hawk swooped down from his perch on a pole; the Magpie flew off. The

Hawk swooped at the Magpie again, and caught the meat in the air after the Magpie dropped it. As neither bird was 20 feet off the ground it was a clever action. I was not aware the Hawk had succeeded until it returned to its pole and commenced eating. The Grey Butcher-Bird gives me a good view of him through the gauze of the meat-house, as he perches within a few feet of me in a pepper-tree (*Schinus molle*) or on a roof-stay. He is a very well-dressed fellow with a large beady eye, and a strong powerful beak with a savage-looking little hook on the end of the top half. Talking of feeding birds, we have a married couple on the north end of the run, and the woman daily feeds crumbs to thirty or more Masked Wood-Swallows (*Artamus personatus**), one Willie Wagtail, and one White-backed Magpie (*G. hypoleuca*). Although the Wood-Swallows are tame by nature, I have not seen them domesticated before. One fell a victim to the house cat before the woman could interfere, but the others are fairly wary. Of course, all this coming for food of the wild birds was due to rather a lean season; now that the rains have come we may expect to lose them as natural food appears in abundance. Galah (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*).—Several of us watched an immense flock of, I should say, over 2,000 one afternoon, rising gradually in the air until they were only small dots in the "blue," and quite unrecognizable. Then came the descent, in hundreds, in scores, in threes, twos, and singles, tossing and falling-like leaves to the gumtrees below. The whole manoeuvre took at least twenty minutes until the last bird was down. One day in the fruit garden I saw a Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) crouched over something. It flew over the high fence into the vegetable garden. When I approached quite close the bird dropped its wings and shook them up and down quite angrily. It then flew off with a load that seemed quite disproportionate to its size. The load was a struggling full-sized Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

* We assume these nomads have recently arrived. The usual food of the species of the genus *Artamus* is given as beetles, cicadas, flies, grasshoppers, and insects. No record has been found of any eating crumbs.—Editors.