

BIRD NOTES

Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) attacking Chickens.—A fortnight before Christmas, 1945, a pair of these birds had a nest with young at my home in Waikerie. One of the pair (presumably the male) was very pugnacious and would attack humans; on one occasion a lady was bitten on the ear and blood drawn. One day I noticed this bird in great excitement flying around an old motor-car chassis in the yard. Hiding beneath the chassis was a brood of about a dozen domestic chicks, only a few days old, and I thought at first that the Willie Wagtail was attacking some animal which had frightened them. However, after watching for a few minutes I found that the Willie Wagtail was attacking the chickens. He would peck them on the back of the head and as soon as the chick was too weak to move would fly down and continue to attack it as it lay on the ground. Five chicks were so badly injured in this way that I had to kill them, but I thought the sacrifice worthwhile in order to confirm the extraordinary actions of the Willie Wagtail. All the chicks attacked were white in colour, although brown and black ones were with them.—M. J. Walter.