

NOTES ON THE WINKING OWL

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In this district the Winking Owl (*Ninox connivens*) has been found in several different localities and may be more plentiful than published records indicate. One of its favourite hunting grounds is among the big red gums along the Mosquito Creek and surrounding country, and its strong call can usually be heard soon after sundown in the winter and early spring months. This call, when uttered close at hand, is a loud "Wuk Wuk," sometimes preceded by a low-pitched "Ho" or "Hoo," but when heard from a distance is not unlike the barking of a dog. It is not repeated so quickly or often as the notes of the Boobook Owl and is in a much lower tone. The Winking Owl is difficult to find by day, but on several occasions single birds have been flushed from their camping places in hollows or thick bushy trees. When disturbed they fly quickly to the nearest shelter, and apparently their daylight vision is quite good.

Over a period of years various reports had been received of this owl breeding here, and although several young birds just flying were seen at different times, it was not until September 17, 1941, that a bird was flushed from a hollow about 30 feet up in a red gum, and a nest discovered.

When the tree was being climbed the male suddenly arrived in the nesting tree beside the female, and both owls kept up an almost continuous growling sound while the hollow was being examined. Two large eggs, white and rounded, were resting on a bed of dried gum leaves about 2 feet down from the opening of the hollow, which for some years previously had been the nesting place of cockatoos. As there was evidence that opossums had also camped in the hollow, it is almost certain that the leaves were carried in by them and not by the birds.

Judging by the behaviour of the owls,

the eggs were near hatching, as both birds repeatedly flew to within 7 or 8 feet of the climber and increased the volume of 'growling,' and it appeared quite feasible that they would have attacked the intruder had the young been out of the eggs.

Late in November, 1946, this spot was again visited, and on this occasion one adult and three young were found in the same group of trees, camped together in a manner somewhat similar to a family of Frogmouths.

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