

ANTING IN STARLINGS (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

"C.M.," of Hawthorn, Victoria, writes: "I have just been watching six starlings 'ant-ing' (April 12, 1959). I have previously observed one Blackbird doing the same thing, but this latest version was quite a corroboree. It had been a very humid day. In the morning I had noticed the ants swarming from their nest. There were some winged ones, and sparrows were "hawking" overhead. About noon I saw the starlings, which were about 10 feet from the ants' nest. They danced about as though excited, picking up ants (? after they had shed their wings) until they had quite a "mouthful." The birds then made a quick dab under each wing. As each

wing was drooped the tail was spread downwards and sideways. The action was so rapid that it was hard to judge just where the ants were applied. When the movements were completed, the birds still had ants in the bill. After a few moments, these were swallowed and a fresh lot gathered up, all in great haste. Temporarily disturbed, the birds flew into a fig tree, but in a minute all were back again. The birds were all in the unworn, speckled plumage. I watched the antics of the birds for 15 minutes before they were finally scared away by a passer-by. A few years ago a Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) was watched "anting" at this same ant-bed.
—H. A. Lindsay.