

BRONZEWING PIGEONS NESTING AT TWO WELLS

The Two Wells sandhills lie about 27 miles due north from Adelaide and about three miles west from Roseworthy Agricultural College. The general trend of the ridges is north-west to south-east, and they are separated by flats of up to a mile in width, all of which are cleared and used for cereal growing.

Vegetation on the low ridges consists of several species of mallee, native pine, porcupine grass and, in some cases, wattles and underbrush. Botanically, it is a survival area, many of the plants found there being not found anywhere nearer than Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, or in the southern Murray Mallee.

Wherever the native flora is killed out, these sand ridges drift away until the underlying clay is exposed. To check the erosion, most landowners have now fenced them off to allow regeneration to take place or to protect the vegetation.

The writer's interest in the area lies in the fact that these dune ridges were once aboriginal camping grounds, and wherever drifting takes place numerous stone implements can be found. A visit was made on March 4, 1960, to see if any had been exposed by erosion during the past year.

Numerous Common Bronze-wings (*Phaps chalcoptera*) were seen, and it was found that they were nesting, principally among the Clematis which climbs over many clumps of mallee. Owing to the open weave of the nests, the eggs could be seen from below if more than 6 feet up, and in some cases the nests were low enough to look into them.

One nest was in the centre of a large clump of porcupine grass. In all the writer's bush experience, this is the only case where this has been seen.

Another point, never observed previously, was that many pigeons flushed from the ground were eating the fine weed seeds gathered by the "harvester ants" and placed around the entrances to their nests to dry out. Only a rough count of the birds was made, but in about one square mile of scrub at least 50 were seen and about 30 nests.

It seems likely that the record dry season in South Australia, with the lowest rainfall since records were started over 100 years ago, prevented the Bronzewings from nesting as usual last spring, through a dearth of food. This year, summer rains have caused a growth of weeds, and their seeds have attracted the birds, with this supply of food causing them to nest towards the end of the summer instead of in the previous spring.—H. A. Lindsay.