

MISTLETOE-BIRD NOTES

(By A. H. Chisholm)

Some observations on the Mistletoe-bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) published recently in the *South Australian Ornithologist* (Vol. 22, pp. 36 and 76), by G. B. Ragless, may perhaps usefully be made the subject of comment.

It is true that this tiny bird favors eucalypt saplings as nest-sites, but it does not "almost invariably" select such trees. In the eastern States, at all events, it frequently builds in acacias, thorny shrubs, and cultivated fruit-trees. In one instance the nest was suspended from the branchlet of a stalk of corn.

Recording an experience with *Dicaeum* as

a vocal mimic, Mr. Ragless says he was astonished to hear these imitations, and he describes the performance as "truly unique." Actually, the Mistletoe-bird has been recognised as a vocal mimic, competent though perhaps casual, since as early as 1866, in which year Dr. E. P. Ramsay, of Sydney, heard a young male imitate perfectly the notes of several species. This record, together with more recent experiences in kind, is mentioned in *Nature's Linguists*, my 22-page booklet on vocal mimicry among Australian birds, which was published by the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria in 1946.