

## AN IRRUPTION OF BUTCHER-BIRDS

Since autumn 1964 the whole of our district (Strathalbyn, Milang Langhorne Creek area) has been invaded by Grey Butcher-Birds (*Cracticus torquatus*). These appeared in March and spread through most of the district where suitable conditions could be found. Territories were quickly established and most farm-houses with a few trees and a sufficient supply of food now (October 1964) have one or a pair of Butcher-Birds in residence. Where Butcher-Birds were resident before the invasion their status is seemingly unchanged. Many of the places which now possess these birds had never seen them before. Most of the visitors were in apparently immature plumage on arrival but the male living near me has brightened noticeably since.

Large insects form a fair part of the diet, while in the vineyards pruners have commented on the number of dead mice hung in forks of the vines. One vigneron, R. R. Cleggett noticed a Butcher-Bird carrying a large object and forced the bird to drop it. It proved to be an adult Willy Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*). The Butcher-Bird watched its prey being examined, then returned to pick it up. The birds have been calling quite frequently throughout the winter and because of their song have been befriended by many people. A surprising result was obtained by G. Natt who began feeding a pair. After some weeks one of the birds became confident enough to enter the house and take food from his hand.

JOHN ECKERT.