

WESTERN WHIPBIRDS NESTING ON KANGAROO ISLAND

By A. F. C. LASHMAR

On 28 August, 1971, in mallee sandhill country near the south coast of the Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, I discovered a Western Whipbird (*Psophodes nigrogularis pondalowiensis*) sitting in a nest. The bird, which was about five feet away, did not seem very alarmed at my presence. When I turned my head to look straight at it, the bird left the nest, but remained within about ten feet of me, and in full view. It called

softly—giving a small part of the usual call—and was answered almost immediately from behind me. The second bird was standing about four or five feet from me, with a skink about 4" in length dangling from its bill. After raising its crest, and giving a scolding call, the bird retreated. The first bird remained present, moving about in the branches of an open shrub. The second bird—which I took to be the

male—appeared much brighter in plumage than the first, and its crest was quite pronounced when erected. The first bird gave no evidence of a crest. The birds were heard to call twice when I first arrived in the area—the usual call which brings to mind the Rufous Songlark.

I took a quick look in the nest, and saw two young, with well-burst pin-feathers, crouching low inside it. They appeared to be very dark in colour—almost black in fact—with dark brownish edges to the feathers. Thus the feather edges appeared lighter than the rest of the body. The daylight was dull at the time. Eight days later I returned, in company with Dr. R. H. Rischbieth, Mr. N. R. Swanson and his sons, to find that the young had disappeared.

The nest was placed about 30" from the ground, with overhead cover, among spindly shrubbery. A base composed of fine, dry, creeper-like twigs and fine sticks—some almost two feet long—supported the main part of the nest, which is a fairly deep structure. It is composed of the dry flags of a type of native iris (?), and is lined

substantially with fine, dry grass. The outside measurements of the nest are about twelve cm. in depth by about twenty-two cm. in width. The internal measurements are six cm. in depth by 7.5 cm. in width. The nest was taken and sent to the South Australian Museum. [See the plate on p. 40.]

I have since heard a Whipbird calling in Section 390, Cape St. Albans, on 8 December, 1971. This record extends the known range of the species.

[Cape Hart is about six miles south-west, and Cape St. Albans about three miles north-north-west, of Cape Willoughby. There is a map showing records of the Whipbird on Kangaroo Island on p. 138 of H. T. Condon's *Handlist of the Birds of South Australia* (2nd ed., 1968). Mr. Condon has informed myself and Mr. Lashmar that both sexes of the Western Whipbird have crests, and that, in his experience, plumage differences between the sexes are negligible. EDITOR.]

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE:—

Condon, H. T. (1966), *The Western Whipbird*, *S.A. Orn.*, 24, 78-91.

NEST OF WESTERN WHIPBIRD

Photograph: Roman Ruehle.

