

## Notes from the Coorong.

BY JOSEPH GORDON HASTINGS.

The following notes are not very extensive owing to the excessive dryness of the season. For the same reason many species of birds have been very scarce. The Little Crakes, Land-rails, and Cranes are not in evidence now. This is due to the light rainfall, the absence of freshwater ponds and consequently no food. One Crane was seen, and a dead Land-rail picked up. The Blue Cranes which had been with us for so long disappeared three months ago. During a trip along the Coorong to the Murray Mouth within the last few days (August 27th, 1919), I did not see half a dozen Blue Cranes, and those I did see were near the lower end of the Coorong, where no doubt there is more food. I came upon several little parties of Water-hens at frequent intervals right up to Twelve Mile Point. Wherever there is any cover in the shape of buslies or reeds close to the water's edge, they seem to have become permanently established, for they have been there ever since the big flocks left several months ago.

The Bristle Bird is much in evidence on the Hummocks just now. For years I have heard this bird's note, but could not place it till a few weeks ago, when at Tawadgery, and then I crept up to a little party of them having a frolic behind a currant bush; they were whistling and calling in their strange notes. I was able to get a good view of them before they saw me. The Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo has been with us for the last four months; in former years they were only here in odd ones, but this year they are very numerous. Only recently I saw six close to the house, and upon another occasion four were seen; in each instance they were very busily occupied in looking for caterpillars, and were very successful.

The Australian Screech or Barn Owl has been seen very frequently during the last six months. One day when out in the back scrub I found two roosting in wells, and on the Hummocks I came across four others, three of which were dead; it is difficult to say if they had been shot by so-called sportsmen or not. These birds were seldom seen here up to the last few months, an odd one being seen in the course of several years, so that their appearance this year is very remarkable.

Seven Night Herons came to us in June; they camped in a gum tree, one of a plantation, and remained for a few days,

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then went off in a southerly direction. Some weeks later another one put in an appearance, and stayed in the same tree for a day, and then passed on in the same direction. I had not been out in the scrub this nesting season till three weeks ago. I was then surprised at the few nests to be seen. I covered in three trips about 200 miles and did not see a dozen nests, whereas in former years there were nests everywhere. I was delighted one day while sitting quietly in the scrub to see a lovely bell bird come well into view, and strike up a beautiful musical note which was continually being changed into another key equally as sweet and musical. The Flame-breasted Robins have been very plentiful this season, and have been with us ever since June. One very remarkable thing connected with these birds is worth mentioning. Very late in the Autumn or early winter during a dry spell a bush fire burnt a lot of our fencing about eight miles back, and while we were repairing it, these Robins were to be seen everywhere picking up food of some sort. I did not think these birds ever left the open grass lands for the scrub country.

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