

Notes on *Aphlocephala nigricincta* (Black-banded
Whiteface), and other Birds.

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This species was noted in flocks of from two to six in number. The call is much sweeter and very different from the ordinary Whiteface, and this bird spends more of its time on the ground. Though we were camped on a bore stream I did not note this species coming into water, although often seen within a

quarter of a mile of it. All other birds observed in the district were noted at the water. This Whiteface started to nest, in common with Orange-fronted Chat, White-winged Wren, and Chestnut crowned Babbler, three weeks before the drought broke. The nest is a bulky, retort shaped structure, the outside being of twigs or branchlets of the "Rolly poley" (Buck Bush), and inside this a layer of dried flower stems and flower pods, with a final snug lining of soft feathers. The noticeable thing about the nest is the long, narrow entrance, one I measured being 9 in. long, and only $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter; this is only scantily lined with feathers for about half the distance from the egg chamber. The nesting places noted were in a Buckbush, (usually a half-green one, which showed up the nest conspicuously, it usually being of a very dark colour; the nest was also found in a prickly acacia, called "Dead finish;" the reason for the name can be readily understood if one accidentally comes in contact with it. I noted that both birds took part in building the nest. They left the nest together, and only one, the female, I presume, in returning carried material, the other bird accompanied her to the bush, whereon he sat and whistled until the former had placed the material in the nest. Then the mate flew off alone, and returned with material which the female who had remained, took and placed in the nest. After this, both birds flew off to again repeat this system; this was done without variation for over an hour, though, of course, I was not able to identify the female. The clutch appeared to be of two eggs, only, for only one clutch of three was noted, and several nests containing two very young birds were observed, but as I left the district a few days after the rain, I was not able to note if the young from the nest had the black band. Very few eggs were hatched out before the rain. Did these birds know that the drought was to break or was it a good guess?

These birds do not resent one touching the nest, or eggs or young, which is rather strange, as it is necessary to almost destroy the long, narrow entrance in order to inspect the contents of the nest.

Epthianura aurifrons (Orange-fronted Chat).—This bird commenced breeding about three weeks before the rain. The clutch was two eggs; only one of three was noted out of fully fifty nests visited. I noted a rather peculiar habit in these pretty creatures. The male sits on the nest from daylight (or as soon as I was able to see) up till 10 o'clock, and though scores of times I visited the nests to test this, I failed to flush the female during these hours, and the male was never flushed from

the nest after that hour. I made a particular study of this, as my work took me past a number of nests, and the result was always the same. I do not know when the male goes upon the nest, but I have flushed the female just at dusk in the evening on dozens of occasions. The female, I noted, was the best actor or actress in pretending lameness to draw danger from her nest. The male appeared the less venturesome, no doubt on account of his brighter coloration.

—Birds on Bore Stream.—

It was very interesting to note that towards sundown all the water birds, seen, i. e., Swans, Black Duck, Pink-eared Duck and Teal, Avocets, Cranes (Antigone), Red Cap and Black-fronted Dotterel, came up near the Bore head (here the water was almost at the boiling point), and passed the night in or near the warm water, returning to their feeding ground in the early hours of morning. The birds evidently appreciate warmth as well as human beings during the cold nights we experienced during May. We were not camped about the Bore head, so they did not leave that part on account of our disturbing them. In fact, it was noticeable that where we camped (about two miles downstream), the bulk of the birds were close to the camp during the day. I think, on account of the sheep watering, they were able to get food that was disturbed by the sheep.

The first bird to call in the morning was *Sphenostoma cristatum pallidum* (the Wedgebill); we called him "Daylight Bird." These were very numerous, but did not appear to have started nesting operations, though they always seemed to be in pairs. They have a very sweet call, but did not sing much during the day time. Numbers of birds, including Antigone, were killed by the fox, which, on our arrival, was very numerous, but for a time, at least, the birds will not be molested, for we destroyed a great many foxes during our sojourn in the sandhill country.
