

Camera Craft

The Dusky Wood-Swallow—From Egg to Bird.—On the 29th November I spent half a day at the nest of a Dusky Wood-Swallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*) at Ringwood. Two days earlier Mr. L. G. Chandler had located the nest, which then contained three eggs. When I arrived at the spot at mid-day on the 29th, the nest contained one young bird and still three eggs. One additional egg, larger and lighter in colour than the others, had been laid in the meantime.

At the first visit I found the female bird much more trustful than is usual with Wood-Swallows. She showed little hesitation in visiting her nest while the camera was 20 inches away. Probably this was due to the advanced state of incubation of the eggs. On the second occasion the female bird showed still greater anxiety, and I allowed her to sit undisturbed while I waited for the male to bring food to her on the nest. This little service he had performed two or three times previously, and I particularly desired to make a record of it.

But when he came near she took it as a signal to have a spell, and allowed him to feed the young bird. I watched the eggs closely during the next quarter of an hour, and moved a few feet away when the female came back. Up till that time there was no sign of chipping, but the female stood on the edge of the nest and pecked carefully at one of the original eggs. Very soon the shell was in two pieces, and between these sections I could see a second young bird struggling. Then the mother carefully pushed one portion of the egg clear of the new arrival, took the shell in her beak and flew away with it, dropping it fifty yards away. I was so interested in the incident that I quite forgot to expose a plate. The head and shoulders of the young bird were still in the remaining part of the shell (the wide end), which adhered to its shoulders. On her return the adult bird made no attempt to remove this portion of egg-shell, but settled very carefully on the nest again.

After a quarter of an hour I roused her and found that the young bird was then free, though head and shoulders were still in the egg. On her return the female again pushed the shell aside, and took it in her beak. But this time I was ready, and before she carried it away I exposed a plate. Unfortunately the plate had been in the camera for nearly an hour, and was badly light struck. The wind had also moved the camera slightly, and had interfered with the focussing.

The young bird was hatched at about 1.30 p.m., and, up till 4.30 p.m. had not been fed. The other young bird, which I judged to have hatched the day before, was fed six times during the same period.—R. T. LITTLEJOHNS, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.



Dusky Wood-Swallow removing egg-shell from the nest after emergence of the young.

Photo. by R. T. Littlejohns, R.A.O.U.



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