

what goal? In September I have seen parties of the same bird coming from the north-west, and, as our species is said to be unknown on the mainland, I can only think of King Island, or some other similar spot in the Strait, as their "camping-ground." At the same moment that the Summer-Birds crossed our town a large flight of Ducks passed at a much greater altitude, making about north-north-east. I do not know whether there is any interchange of communication between our Ducks and those of the mainland; possibly those noted were making to the Furneaux Group of islands, which would not be a great journey.

The Wood-Swallows (*Artamus tenebrosus*) left us about the middle of April, after first mustering for two or three weeks in some paddocks by the sea-front; but on 2nd May I noted a pair of Tree-Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) over Devonport, and on 10th May a Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) was flying low about the streets.

[The scientific names given above are those adopted by Mr. G. M. Mathews in his recent "Handlist" (Supplement *Emu*, vii.)]—H. STUART DOVE.

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AN OOLOGIST'S PARADISE.—Shortly previous to the last A.O.U. Congress (November, 1908), I took a trip to the lower reaches of the Murray River and out back into the adjacent Mallee scrub.

Accompanied by my wife, I left Adelaide one afternoon by the Melbourne express, reached Murray Bridge that evening, made arrangements for a boat, and left early in the morning, going down stream. The first halt was made at Monteith's Flat, and, after landing our kit and forming camp, we struck in over some pine-clad sand-hills. Birds were fairly numerous. The Varied Parrakeet (*Psephotus multicolor*) was observed nesting in a hollow branch of a box-tree (eucalypt), and near by a little Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*) had her frail nest, perched high up on the horizontal fork of a pine bough, and almost in the next tree was a nest of the White-shouldered Caterpillar-eater (*Lalage tricolor*). Again within a stone's throw was the pretty pendent nest of the Spiny-cheeked Honey-eater (*Acanthochaera ruficularis*), while almost every other tree contained a nest in this warm and sheltered corner between two sand-hills. Red-capped Robins (*Petroeca goodenovi*) were nesting very plentifully this season, and their beautifully constructed nests were difficult to discover in the forks of the pine-trees, owing to particles of the bark and lichens being fastened on to the outside of the nest to deceive their enemies. Great Brown Kingfishers (*Dacelo gigas*) were brooding in the hollows of the old gum-trees (eucalypts) on the edge of the

swamp, and the mud nests of the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*) were seen everywhere. The fine Goshawk (*Astur approximans*) had eggs in a nest in the top of a high pine. We were not in camp that night till after dark, and then had to prepare our evening meal and see to our bunks, after which I blew some eggs collected during the day for museum purposes.

Early next morning we made a move down the river, but before starting saw some Black-and-White Swallows (*Cheramæca leucosternum*), which were tunnelling into a sand-bank. One nest we excavated was composed of dry grass, roots, and leaves, and contained four eggs. As we proceeded, the little Grass-Warblers (*Cisticola exilis*) were found nesting in the high grass and dock on the edge of the swamp. Their nests, being most beautiful and delicately constructed, are perfect works of art. The dock-leaves are marvellously sewn round on both sides, and looking in through the small aperture one sees the three pretty green-mottled eggs. Not far from here the Little Grass-Birds (*Megalurus gramineus*) were nesting in the cutting-grass; their nests were covered in on the top with Bald-Coots' (*Porphyrio melanonotus*) feathers, completely hiding the red-speckled eggs. Reed-Warblers (*Acrocephalus australis*) were nesting freely amongst the reeds on the river bank, and, strange to say, I observed one nest lined with feathers—a feature which has never come under my notice before. Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*) were brooding in the tops of high gums, hundreds of feet from the ground or water, as the case may be, and after a hard climb I procured a fine clutch of two eggs. Bald-Coots had their nests in the flags, and I observed one clutch of ten eggs. Musk-Ducks (*Biziura lobata*) were numerous, and I noted a clutch of six eggs—the largest I have known. These shy birds build a beautiful dome-shaped nest of plaited reeds and flags, lined inside with down plucked from the Ducks' own bodies. Back from the swamps a stick was thrown at a likely hollow limb, and out flew a Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*). Climbing up, I saw a clutch of eggs lying on the decayed wood, and, strange to say, one egg was prominently marked—even more so than the one in Mr. Le Souëf's collection. After entering the scrub, a Hooded Robin's (*Petræca bicolor*) nest was discovered, and in a bunch of cutting-grass the nest of the White-fronted Bush-Chat (*Ephthianura albifrons*), containing three speckled eggs, was discovered. On our way back to camp that night, an aquatic bird left a clump of rushes very hastily, and dived off. On hunting the rushes, a nest was found which resembled a Musk-Duck's in every way with the exception of its being but half the size, and inside six eggs lay in a bed of down, the same shape and colour as those of the Musk-Duck but only half their size. Here was a mystery, so the eggs were left, in order that the bird might be seen for identification. Next morning a visit was

paid to the locality, and on approaching the place stealthily a rustle was heard and a "plomp," the rings on the water telling that the bird had again dived out of sight, but on reappearing it proved, as I had supposed, to be a female Blue-billed Duck (*Erismatura australis*), a rare species, and thus cleared up the identity of the nest and eggs. This is the first clutch of the Blue-billed Duck's eggs I have taken. From here a long tramp was commenced into the thick Mallee scrub, and it was late in the day before my wife and self reached the home of the Mallee-Hen (*Lipoa*). After some time we discovered an egg-mound lately covered up. An examination of the ground for some distance in every direction revealed the numerous tracks of foxes, and there is no doubt that these animals not only dig out the eggs but lie in wait for the unfortunate birds, as the feathers in the vicinity only too plainly showed. There is not a shadow of doubt that the extermination of these quaint birds will take place within a few years. After a very hard journey (the latter part in the dark), we reached our camp exceedingly tired. The following day found me rowing up stream on the return journey to Murray Bridge—a tough job, for our boat was heavy and well laden, while the stream ran strongly against us. But what cared we for that; we had had a very profitable trip both as regards specimens collected and observations made.—(CAPT.) S. A. WHITE. Fulham, S.A.

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THE PILOT-BIRD (PYCNOPTILUS FLOCCOSUS).*—The township of Ferntree Gully (about 22 miles due east of Melbourne) is situated at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, and the gully itself is reached after a few minutes' walk. The creek is confined between rather low and heavily timbered ranges, and is fringed with a scrub of wire-grass (*Ehrhata*), sword-grass (*Lepidosperma*), and native hop (*Goodenia ovata*). A second growth of sassafras, hazel, and musk is surmounted by very tall timber, so that one can readily imagine its density. Here in the shadowed obscurity is the home of this terrestrial and silver-throated form. As I mentioned elsewhere, the bird is very plentiful, but one needs patience to obtain sight of it. During the seasons of 1907-8 a good deal of time was spent with this bird, and I have been enabled to correct many wrong impressions and to add new facts of its domestic economy. For instance, the call note, "Guinea-a-week," is only used by the male, and the female responds quickly (like the female of *Psophodes*), "Qui-wit-tui-wit-tee," and a perceptible pause is noticed between the second and third syllables, the last note being considerably higher. We have observed, too, that the birds are local to an extraordinary degree, and after marking down a pair one can

* Supplementary to "Observations" in *The Emu*, vi., p. 183.



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