

the next round of the paddock had been made. This is the only case that we have observed of egg covering.

My son has found other nests with eggs when adults have left but has witnessed a display only on the three occasions described above.

I have seen the distraction display twice, but in neither case could I locate eggs or chicks. The bird moves with wings and tail spread close to the ground. In this posture the white undertail coverts are rather conspicuous.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Harvey.

**Territorial Confrontation between Two Species of Whistlers** (*Pachycephala*)—During the visit of the W.A. Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union to Busselton in October 1973, members witnessed an unusual confrontation between individuals of two different species of whistlers. Territorial challenges are usually intra-specific, and it is of interest to record the reactions between two allied species whose songs, though having a certain resemblance, are sufficiently distinct even to an untrained human ear.

On October 8, near the mouth of the Abba River, in open forest land interspersed with thickets, a male Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) was seen whistling a strong territorial challenge. There was a prompt response by a male Rufous Whistler (*P. rufiventris*) some chains away. The two birds repeated their challenges, drawing closer, and growing more excited as they approached each other, taking up perches and whistling at each stand, until the Rufous Whistler in great agitation took up his station in a large tuart tree, while the Golden Whistler was challenging in an adjacent tree. One more challenge and move by either would have brought them to the tense beak-to-beak encounter which is sometimes seen with Rufous Whistlers. In these moments the rivals, in their emotion, may forget briefly to fly and will fall almost to the ground. However in the present instance, at this point, the Golden Whistler drew away. The withdrawal was not precipitate—more in line with an acceptance of definition of boundaries. It could still be a claimant for land and dispute the Rufous if *he* dared step beyond that tuart.

These two species, so alike in many ways, are not commonly found together because they usually prefer different habitats. There is an overlap near the site of the Naturalists' Club's proposed field station at Culeenup Island, Yundurup, where a more detailed study of this interesting behaviour might be made.

Three interesting speculations arise:

1. Do these two species as a general rule recognise and respond to each other's challenges, or was this an isolated individual aberration?

2. If they do challenge each other consistently what is the effect on the breeding of the rival birds—especially as the initial stages of courtship (at least in young birds) often begins like a territorial display? This might result in a no-man's-land of ineffective breeding between the local ranges of the two species, and perhaps help to define them.

3. In this Abba River confrontation it was the Golden Whistler which yielded. Perhaps it is the nature of the particular local environment which decides the issue. In relatively open country the Rufous Whistler may be expected to obtain the mastery; but perhaps in more densely-wooded environments that species will have less confidence and the Golden Whistler will triumph.

—RICA ERICKSON, Nedlands.

**Fish Attacks Man.**—While walking in knee deep water on the reef that surrounds Adele Island, near Derby, a shell collector, Mr. I. Prince, and his companion were, in his own words, "viciously attacked by a ferocious looking fish". The fish was first observed lying between two rocks but as they approached closer it sprang out at them snapping at their ankles. Mr. Prince attempted to move away from the fish's ap-



Erickson, Rica. 1974. "From Field and Study: Territorial Confrontation between Two Species of Whistlers (*Pachycephala*).*" The Western Australian Naturalist* 12(8), 182–182.

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