

Having no companions among the wild birds this pigeon often lingers around our poultry. On occasions it feeds on wheat on the ground with the fowls. It is remarkably tame and is easily approached. Often attention is drawn to it by the loud whirring noise of its wings when it takes flight.

—DIGBY DARLINGTON, Shackleton.

Spider Predator on a Vertebrate.—On February 20, 1955, about half way between Morawa and Pintharuka, a specimen of the Theraphosid spider *Selenocosmia crassipes* (Koch) was observed to have at the bottom of its burrow a malodorous, mutilated specimen of a frog. It is of interest that in some parts of the world Theraphosids are called "Bird-eating Spiders". The frog was partly bound up with web and after this was removed it was possible to measure and identify the specimen. It was identified as *Helioporus centralis* Parker and it measured approximately 3.20 cm. The spider was not grossly larger than the prey, measuring 4.30 cm. from the front of the chelicerae to the tip of the abdomen, excluding the spinnerets. Presumably the spider killed the frog outside the burrow since there was no damage to the flimsy silk lining, which damage would have undoubtedly occurred if the prey had struggled within the burrow. Several days before the above discovery there had been in the area a thunderstorm with heavy rain, after which many frogs surfaced and formed breeding congresses in nearby creeks. It is believed that the only other record of an Australian spider feeding on frogs is the observation of Mrs. L. Watson (reported in McKeown's book "Australian Spiders", 1952, Angus and Robertson) of *Atrax formidabilis* (Rainbow), the tree funnel-web spider, feeding on the tree frog *Hyla caerulea* (Shaw). Although terrestrial insects form the main part of the diet of *S. crassipes* the above record shows that it can and actually does occasionally take vertebrate prey.

—BARBARA YORK MAIN and A. R. MAIN,
Zoology Department, University of Western Australia.

Unusual Cuckoo Hosts.—When Mr. I. C. Carnaby and I were bird observing at Tunnel Creek on Turee Station, north of the Ashburton River, on July 31, 1955, we came across a rarely recorded instance of the Black-eared Cuckoo (*Misocalius osculans*) parasitising the Yellow-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*). The nest was situated in a clump of mistletoe on a Casuarina and contained two eggs of the thornbill and one of the cuckoo. The eggs of the thornbill were typical in colour and measured 16.0 x 12.1 mm. and 16.1 x 11.7 mm. The cuckoo's egg was a deep chocolate, measuring 19.2 x 14.5 mm. The only previous example of this combination was reported from Central Australia and details are given by A. J. North (*Nests and Eggs*, vol. 3, 1912, p. 15).

On the following day, August 1, we found a nest of the Banded Whiteface (*Aphelocephala nigricincta*) on the Turner Flats, a few miles south-west of the Mulgul Station homestead. This nest, which was situated in a wax-bush approximately 18 in. above the ground,

contained one egg of the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*), measuring 17.1 x 12.5 mm., together with two eggs of the whiteface, which measured 16.0 x 12.6 mm., and 16.1 x 12.6 mm. The cuckoo's egg so much resembled the host's eggs in colour and size that only close inspection identified the cuckoo's egg. It was more elongated in shape and the markings were in the form of distinct small spots instead of blotches. This species of whiteface has not previously been recorded as a host of the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo.

—P. J. FULLER, West Perth.

A Further Record of *Puffinus gavia* from Western Australia.

—On June 13, 1956, a storm-driven specimen of the Fluttering Shearwater (*Puffinus gavia*) was collected by E. M. Watson on Swanbourne beach, 5 miles north of Fremantle. The bird, which had been ashore for about two days, was in poor condition, but the distinctively coloured legs and the distribution of the plumage colours on the head were still clearly discernible. The dimensions were: length, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; culmen, 37.8 mm.; wing, 228 mm.; tail, 70 mm.; tarsus, 44 mm.; middle toe and claw, 53 mm. The beak was pale lead-grey; tarsus, grey-brown on the outer aspect and white-flesh on the inner. The dark feathering on the head extended well below eye-level.

The specimen clearly belonged to the large race *huttoni* and its dimensions approach the largest examples of that race reviewed by D. L. Serventy (*Emu*, vol. 39, 1939, p. 103). It was apparently a fairly mature bird as the white feathering on the throat was restricted to a rather narrow central strip, as illustrated by Serventy for his adult South Australian specimen (Pl. 14, right figure), and the under-wing pattern agreed with Serventy's fig. 2.

The only other specimen of this petrel known from Western Australia is a beach derelict found at Bunbury by F. Lawson Whitlock on May 23, 1937, and which was described as a new species (*P. leptorhynchus*) by Gregory Mathews. The race *huttoni* is believed to breed at the Snares Island, south of New Zealand, but V. I. Clark and C. A. Fleming (*N.Z. Bird Notes*, vol. 2, 1948, p. 187) state that as no later visitors to the Snares have seen this petrel there is a possibility that the original specimens were wrongly labelled. Specimens of *huttoni* have been taken in various parts of southern Australia, north to Garie in N.S.W., and in Cook Strait, New Zealand.

—J. A. L. WATSON, Zoology Department,
University of Western Australia.

A Recent Western Australian Record of the Ghost Bat (*Macroderma gigas*).—The Ghost Bat (*Macroderma gigas* (Dobson)) has been rarely collected or observed in Western Australia. The last two specimens to reach the Western Australian Museum were from Mt. Anderson Station, in the Kimberley Division (January, 1931) and from the All Nations Mine, Nullagine (January, 1942). It is of interest, therefore, to record a specimen taken by the



Fuller, Phillip J. 1956. "From Field and Study: Unusual Cuckoo Nests." *The Western Australian Naturalist* 5(6), 139–140.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/273730>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/311893>

Holding Institution

Western Australian Naturalists' Club (Inc.)

Sponsored by

Atlas of Living Australia

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Western Australian Naturalists' Club (Inc.)

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.