

lice, which they no doubt get from their parents, which are ground-frequenting birds, and as such liable to be vermin-infested. I recently noticed close by its nest the remains of an adult bird which had evidently been devoured by a fox, and since they build their nests but 2 feet 6 inches to 7 feet from the ground, mostly in "wire-grass," entangled "hickory" scrub, either in its green or dry state, and also in tea-tree and other shrubs, a fox would have no difficulty in catching them. The nest is composed of wire-like grass and rootlets of a chocolate-brown colour generally, strongly though loosely put together in a circular style of architecture, the colour harmonizing with that of the young nestlings. The eggs (two) of the Coachwhip are very beautiful, being of a light bluish or greenish white, moderately blotched and marked with sepia and light grey. Some clutches have, in addition to the blotchings, hieroglyphic-like markings. The diameter of the nest is usually 6 inches, but I have found nests only 4 inches across, containing about half the quantity of material usually comprising their nest, which, when in this condition, may easily be mistaken for a Thickhead's (*Pachycephala*) nest. (See illustration.) The Coachwhip-Bird, of which there are two or three species in Australia, is distributed over both the eastern and western regions. They are local in their habits, rarely venturing more than a few hundred yards from their headquarters. A pair seems to have a definite area, from which they seem to expel intruders of the same species as themselves. Should a person in eastern forests apparently hear two pairs calling in close proximity to one another he will discover on investigation that a Lyre-Bird (*Menura*) is probably mimicking the calls of the Coachwhip. This they do to perfection—in fact, the Lyre-Bird is the leading mimic among the ornis of the world.

Oological Notes and Further Description of New Fruit-Pigeon.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, COL. MEM. B.O.U.

PSEUDOGERYGONE BRUNNEIPECTUS (Brown-breasted Fly-eater).

This little-known bird is found farther down the eastern coast than was suspected, its habitat probably extending to the Fitzroy. Mr. E. M. Cornwall lately found it breeding at Mackay, where it appears a common species in the vicinity of mangrove swamps, and from which locality he has enriched my collection with both nest and eggs. He also sent a bird for identification. The first nest was discovered on the 8th October, 1905, and was suspended about 10 feet from the ground in a mangrove. A second nest was taken on the 26th November following, also placed in a mangrove about 5 feet from the ground.

Nest.—Very lengthened in form, with hooded side-entrance, and composed chiefly of brownish strips of bark with the addition of a few leaves, &c., and matted with insect cocoons, the inside being lined with finer material and feathers. Total length, 18 inches (thus divided—top portion 7 inches, nest proper 6 inches, and tail 5 inches) by a breadth of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Eggs.—Clutch, three; oval in shape; texture of shell fine, surface slightly glossy; colour, light pinkish buff, richly spotted and blotched (thickest round the apex) with pinkish-red and purplish-red. These eggs are amongst the most richly coloured of all the known eggs of Australian Fly-eaters. Dimensions in inches :—(1) .7 x .5, (2) .7 x .5, (3) .7 x .5.

ACANTHIZA HALMATURINA (Dusky Tit).

This new species was observed by the members of the expedition of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union which recently visited Kangaroo Island, and was described by Mr. A. G. Campbell in the last number of *The Emu* (vol. v., p. 141).

Nest.—Resembles that of the Little Brown Tit (*A. pusilla*), but is more heavily built. One nest noticed was placed about a foot from the ground in a small bush on the heath lands. Another was observed about 3 feet from the ground in a short prickly acacia near the coast.

Eggs.—Clutch, three; oval in shape; texture of shell fine, surface glossy; colour, pearly-white, with blotches of rufous-red round the apex, and sparingly spotted with the same colour over the rest of the surface. Dimensions in inches :—(1) .7 x .52, (2) .7 x .52, (3) .67 x .5. Amongst the largest of *Acanthiza* eggs.

PORZANA FLUMINEA (Spotted Crake).

Mr. John G. Gray, Kentucky (New South Wales), reports finding a nest of this Crake, hitherto unknown, in a small swamp on his run. The swamp was nearly dry on the 18th December, 1905, when the nest was discovered. The nest was about 6 inches from the water, in a knot of rushes, some of the rushes being interlaced over the nest. There was no staging to the nest. The clutch was four, with the small ends of the eggs placed downwards. The eggs were more greenish in tone and more finely marked than the two types described in "Nests and Eggs," p. 745. Dimensions in inches :—(1) 1.25 x .91, (2) 1.25 x .82, (3) 1.22 x .89, (4) 1.17 x .88.

CUCKOOS.

At a meeting of the Bird Observers' Club held on the 14th February, Mr. Septimus Robinson, Bathurst (New South Wales), exhibited a fine collection of 46 Cuckoos' eggs, with the respective eggs of the foster-parents. One remarkable feature was that there were no single eggs of foster-parents—all full clutches, two to four eggs, as the case may be. In all instances

the colouration of the strange egg did not harmonize with those of the foster-parent, but were beautiful contrasts. For instances, the red-speckled egg of the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo with the bluish-green eggs of the Grass-Warbler; the same Cuckoo's egg with a plain white set of the Red-browed Finch; the flesh-coloured egg of the Pallid Cuckoo with the greenish egg of the Hooded Robin, or with the light olive clutch of the Rufus-breasted Thickhead.

In the collection the following foster-parents are not recorded in my work, "Nests and Eggs," namely:—

For the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*)—

Fulvous-fronted Honey-eater (*Glycyphila fulvifrons*).*

Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*).*

For the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*)—

Yellow-throated Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis citreogularis*).

Yellow-faced Honey-eater (*Ptilotis chrysops*).

For the Square-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*)—

Large-billed Fly-eater (*Pseudogerygone magnirostris*).

For the Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalis*)—

White-throated Fly-eater (*Gerygone albigularis*).

Chestnut-rumped Tit (*Acanthiza uropygialis*).

Orange-fronted Bush-Chat (*Ephthianura aurifrons*).

Black Honey-eater (*Myzomela nigra*).

Yellow-faced Honey-eater (*Ptilotis chrysops*).

Three clutches—namely, Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*), White-shafted Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*), and Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*)—were each accompanied by an egg of a Cuckoo, which, if not referable to the Square-tailed Cuckoo (*C. variolosus*), is unknown to me. They are smaller in size and lighter in colour than typical eggs of the Square-tailed Cuckoo, and may be described thus:—Short oval in shape; texture of shell fine; surface glossy and pure white in colour, with a few sepia or dark brown spots about the upper quarter. Dimensions in inches:—(1) .67 x .49, (2) .65 x .5, (3) .74 x .52.

The date on the Blue Wren's set was 29/1/00, that of the Brown Flycatcher 20/2/01, while no date is furnished with the White-shafted Fantail's.

While on the subject of Cuckoos, it is of interest to record that there are in the collection of Colonel C. S. Ryan two eggs apparently belonging to the Black-eared Cuckoo (*Mesocallius palliolatus*), taken this season with sets of the Little Field-Wren (*Chthonicola sagittata*), near Dandenong Creek, Victoria. It is somewhat remarkable to find this interior Cuckoo wandering so far south. But the variable seasons of late have been pushing

* Both these new foster-parents for the Pallid Cuckoo were first mentioned by Mr. A. J. North in connection with Mr. Leslie M. Moore's collection. See Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W., June, '05, meeting.

birds out of their usual tracks. For instance, the Ground-Wren (*Hylacola pyrrhopygia*) has this season been shot in the Dandenong Ranges. The specimen was exhibited at the January meeting of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria by Mr. C. French, jun.

ERISMATURA AUSTRALIS (Blue-billed Duck).

As some doubt exists as to the full complement of eggs to a clutch * laid by this little-known Duck, Mr. J. C. FitzGerald, Neuarcurr, Victoria, has thoughtfully sent me the following note :—"I have a lake at the foot of my garden where Black Duck, Teal, and Mountain-Duck rear a number of clutches every year, their only enemies being Swamp-Hawks (Harriers), which kill a good many of the little ones before they are old enough to look after themselves. Musk-Duck, and occasionally Wood-Duck, also breed here. As I do not permit any shooting on the lake, they are all very tame.

"This year a pair of Blue-billed Ducks appeared, which (thanks to your book) I was able to identify, not having seen the species in this district before. The Duck laid *six* eggs about 2 feet above the water in the fibrous roots of an osier-willow, and has been sitting about 10 days. She is very tame, and will allow one to approach within a few feet before diving into the water."

Subsequently Mr. FitzGerald wrote regretfully stating that the clutch of the Blue-billed Duck had unfortunately been destroyed. When the eggs were apparently within a few days of being hatched three of them were found broken, while the other three were in the shallow water by the nest unbroken. Mr. FitzGerald thinks the culprit was a Musk-Duck, which was observed always hanging about the nest and annoying the Blue-bills by pursuing them.

PTILOPUS MINUTUS (Small Green Fruit-Pigeon).

Mr. Clifford Coles, taxidermist, &c., Victoria-arcade, Castle-reagh-street, Sydney, writes :—"Referring to the new Fruit-Pigeon mentioned in *The Emu*, vol. v., p. 155, I would like to submit a skin which appears to me like the missing male of the bird in question. I secured it among a lot of North Queensland birds. I regret much to have no information respecting it except that the person from whom I obtained it had been collecting in the Atherton and Cairns districts for several years. The bird was labelled 'Pigeon (male), N.Q.'"

The note and male specimen kindly sent by Mr. Coles are very opportune, coming so soon after Mr. Cornwall's female specimen, and confirm the new species which I ventured to provisionally name *Ptilopus minutus* in the last issue of *The*

* Gould, 2 to 9 or 10, "Handbook," vol. ii., p. 380; Campbell, 4 or 5, "Nest and Eggs," p. 1052.

Emu. Judging by appearance, I should say the bird submitted by Mr. Coles has been skinned for several years—perhaps five.

The skin may be thus described:—*Male*.—General colour, bronze or metallic green; on hind-crown an irregular-edged patch of violet or plum colour, and some of the feathers of the mantle centred with peacock blue; wing coverts and secondaries edged with yellow; primaries dark grey edged with dull or yellowish white; tail, greenish above, greyish underneath, and tipped with dull white. Throat grey, and feathers of the breast tipped or hackled with French grey; greenish feathers of the rest of the under surface slightly tipped with yellow; abdominal patch, which runs into the under tail coverts, yellowish white, some of the tail coverts being edged with green. The thighs are feathered, and the first primary of each wing has a terminal notch or spatule as in the third primary of the Alexandra Parrakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*). Feet yellowish; bill bluish-slate, with a lighter (creamy) tip.

Dimensions in inches:—Length, 8.0; wing, 5.0; tail, 2.75; bill, .49; tarsus, .7.

It will be noticed that the male differs from the female by its slightly larger dimensions, purple hind-cap, hackled breast, abdominal patch more defined, and by the notched first primary.

A Psalm of Dawn.

BY A. G. CAMPBELL.

(Read before the Bird Observers' Club, 24th January, 1906.)

AWAY out at the base of the ranges lay a sleeping camp. It nestled in a thick brake of scrub that clung to the track of a small watercourse, still running. The night was clear and warm, with hardly a breath of air to disturb the foliage or drive off the mosquitoes, which were in hundreds. A Boobook Owl had been heard some distance off; the querulous cry of the Little Nightjar had disturbed the silence; now little was audible save the dull gurgling of the creek as it made its tired way over the stones. A solitary Brush Cuckoo whistled once on the hillside. A few cicadas, as if restless in the warm air, sent forth their strumming din into the night with weird effect.

The picture, indeed, was complete of which some poet has sung—

“ The lone owl's hoot,
The waterfall's faint drip—or insect stir
Among the emerald leaves—or infant wind
Rifling the dewy lips of sleeping flowers—
Alone disturbs the silence of the night.”

Towards morning the wind and the night voices became still.



Campbell, Archibald James. 1906. "Oological Notes and Further Description of New Fruit-Pigeon." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 5(4), 195–199. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu905195>.

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