

six abandoned nests of the Red-browed Finch (*Ægitha temporalis*), containing a dead young Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx*) and a clutch of nearly incubated eggs. In every case the young Cuckoo was no more than a day or two old, and the thought suggested itself that the Cuckoo had either been poisoned by the seed supplied by the Finch (the Cuckoo being an insectivorous bird), or the Finches had discovered the fraud perpetrated on them and refused to feed the stranger. In four of the cases the Finch had built again in close proximity to the abandoned nest, and each nest contained a fresh set of eggs, but no egg of the Cuckoo.—T. H. TREGALLAS.

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RECORD CLUTCH OF STRUTHIDEA'S EGGS.—On the 14th December, 1907, I found a Jumper's nest in a small brigalow (Acacia), and, on climbing up found to my surprise and pleasure that it contained no less than twelve eggs, all fresh or slightly incubated. The eggs differ considerably, and I think three if not four females must have laid in the nest. Three of the eggs are very long, and taper much to the smaller end. Three others, again, are similar—they are short, blunt-ended eggs, the markings on two being extremely small and faint, while the third egg is quite white. I have never seen an entirely white Struthidea's egg before. The remaining six are all much alike, and may be the production of one bird or two—most probably two. Observing that the eggs were fresh, I would have left them a few days to see if the birds laid any more, but I was afraid of an iguana finding the nest, so I thought "twelve eggs in the hand are worth twenty in an iguana," and took them. Another nest found previously contained eight eggs heavily incubated, so the Jumpers must be bent on rearing large families this year.—ERNEST D. BARNARD. Gladstone, Queensland, 16/12/07.

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ANTICS OF THE SOUTHERN STONE-PLOVER (*Burhinus grallarius*) AND THE "WALTZING INSTINCT" OF OSTRICHES.—In *Nature* of 23rd January, 1908, p. 278, is a reference to an article by S. J. E. Duerdin in the *Journal of the South African Ornithologists' Union* for December, 1907, on the "waltzing instinct" of Ostriches, as follows:—Ostriches, it appears, are in the habit of running off suddenly with a peculiar whirring movement, sometimes one way, sometimes another, simultaneously spreading their wings, which are alternately raised and depressed. These movements, the author suggests, may be connected with escape from the clutches of the large carnivora. "Indulged in instinctively as play while young, and even when adult, the performance gives the bird expertness in the rapid jerking movements which are those first followed in alarm."

The description of these performances of Ostriches are strikingly like those described by myself in *The Emu* of April, 1906, p. 192, in connection with Southern Stone-Plovers. My words are as follows:—"At times these Plovers performed peculiar antics or dances. When in this humour one of the birds would run with outstretched wings about 20 or 30 yards, bending occasionally to this or that side, or even turning suddenly completely round. (Is there any connection between this and, on the one hand, the weird dances of the Native Companion (*Antigone australasiana*)—on the other, the peculiar little duck of the head when walking practised by some of the Dottrels and their allies?)" I hardly think the explanation given in the case of the Ostriches (*i.e.*, escape from pursuers) can apply to the Southern Stone-Plovers, and to me it seems more likely that all these peculiar actions—in the Ostrich, Stone-Plover, Australian Crane, and various Dottrels—are individual specific or even generic characteristics, as bound up with the bird in question as any other recognised descriptive trait, such as plumage, size, &c. While on this question of bird actions, can anyone give an explanation of the peculiar flicking of the tail in some Bald-Coots (*Porphyrio*), which takes place when they are alarmed? This flicking exposes a patch of pure white feathers, which are then very noticeable.—(DR.) J. B. CLELAND. Perth (W.A.), 25/2/08.

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CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THE TASMANIAN MAGPIE.—In support of the contention that the Lesser White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hyperleuca*) is a bird of distinctive character, I will narrate an incident which I witnessed a few years ago. I preface the narration of it with the remark that it is a matter for regret that the name "Magpie-Shrike" was not bestowed upon this bird in preference to a name which has been for so long a time and until recently was exclusively applied to another bird. A Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus cinereus*), which affected a certain locality, darted suddenly in pursuit of a small bird—I think, a House-Sparrow—whereupon a Magpie appeared and intercepted the Butcher-Bird, and by circling round the smaller bird caused the former to desist from its purpose and to take to flight. I have already alluded in *The Emu* to a habit of chasing Ground-Larks (*Anthus*). On a later occasion I saw the Ground-Lark overtaken by the Magpie. The Magpie, however, only brushed past the Ground-Lark (which uttered a shrill cry) and went its way.

A tame female Magpie, which I have seen on one or two occasions, was sometimes attacked by a wild bird of the same species, and defended itself by lying on its back, and in that position warding off its opponent with beak and feet. If decisively worsted, it retired beneath a leafy bush, whither the



Cleland, John Burton. 1908. "Antics of the Southern Stone-Plover (*Burhinus grallarius*) and the "Waltzing Instinct" of Ostriches." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 7(4), 188–189.

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