

till the second party of birds forced him down again. Had there been but one or two birds attacking, the fox would have no doubt escaped easily, but five had a decided advantage over him, for when two birds struck at him together the other three were ready to dart down on the ascension of the first two. Every bird struck at the animal's head, but as the fox kept this flat on the ground, he was not harmed. This "duck and run" procedure was kept up for the space of some 300 yards, when Reynard reached a sanctuary in the shape of a clump of thistles. The disappointed Crows circled round for a while, cawed dismally at the landscape, and departed.

Crow *v.* Rabbit.—This is not the first time I have witnessed such an exhibition of pugnacity on the part of the Crow. A few months ago I saw a somewhat similar chase with a rabbit as central figure.

The Usefulness of the Crow.—These two animals, the fox and rabbit, are the two principal pests of the farmers hereabouts, and if the Crow (or any other bird) could be proved to be instrumental in diminishing their rapidly increasing numbers the bird would be far more favourably looked upon than it is just at present.—A. A. CHISHOLM. Maryborough, Vict.

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AMONG BRISTLE-BIRDS.—November has many attractions in the field. Taking advantage of a public holiday early in the month, two of us wheeled away from Geelong to the south coast outside Port Phillip, covering the distance in about three hours against as stiff an ocean breeze as one cares to face on the cycle. Thence south-west we followed the coast down toward Cape Otway. Evening was coming on, the wind was rising, with every promise of a stormy night, and on we hurried, skirting the steep cliffs, anxious to find suitable cover for the night. Necessarily we travelled "light," having a little plain fare and a rug apiece, ready even to do without water in this man-forsaken tract, that we might observe in its curious home the Bristle-Bird (*Sphenura broadbenti*). Leaving the track at the top of a spur, we made down to the coast, a mile distant, and there met some thick brakes of tea-tree just as the last light of evening waned, but not too late to hear a welcome loud-voiced warble of a Bristle-Bird not far away.

The gale increased, the sea lashed on the long line of reef off shore, where the *Inverlochy* had perished some months previously, and the waves moaned on the beach, where they had cast up in all odd corners the wooden wreckage of the vessel. In the thickest part of the tea-tree we passed the night. By the side of a roaring fire, fed from the wreckage on the beach, we lay down to rest, though not to sleep much, for we were alter-



nately roasted on one side and frozen on the other, so cold and draughty was our camp, and night watch was called frequently to add more fuel to the fire. However, the gale died away in the early morning, and the dawn broke fair and promising, with Singing Honey-eaters whistling their tuneful calls. The first bird out of the tea-tree brake saw us demolishing our morning meal, and by the time the sun came up, thrusting his rays like long red fingers through the horizon clouds, the Bristle-Birds were awake and calling to one another about the scrub.

The tea-tree here is not the coastal broad-leaf *Leptospermum* common on the east shore of Port Phillip, but a fine-leaved bottlebrush-flowering *Melaleuca*. It grows shorter and denser, its branches much from the ground, and the tops in some places grow so thick and matted that sunlight is excluded. They are very difficult to push through, often the easiest way to examine them being to crawl about beneath. Clumps and belts of this tea-tree clothe the wind-blown slopes of Bristle-Bird Point, otherwise known as Point Addis, a triple-headed limestone bluff about half-way between Port Phillip Heads and Cape Otway. This seems to be the limit to which a small party of Bristle-Birds have ventured out from their tangled forest home in Cape Otway. It is, in fact, remarkable that such a unique bird, and a ground dweller in heavy forests, should find congenial surroundings in a patch of wind-swept scrub by the sea-shore. We examined the patches and belts of tea-tree for some two miles south-west, and in all were located one or more pairs of birds. In some places the tea-tree approaches on to the high-water mark, and then it is thickly matted in with long coastal sword-grass, which also makes a tangled home for the Bristle-Bird. That morning the persistent calls of a bird in the clump where we passed the night led us to make a search therein first, with the result that its bulky nest was discovered, containing one large, red-speckled egg. A continued search revealed the fact that there were in all five nests in the clump, presumably all belonging to the same birds; three were of last year or older, and one other was this season's, having had a fledgling in it. It had also an addled egg, which, though it had lost some colour, made a good cabinet specimen. Here was a point that emphasized itself the more we became acquainted with the Bristle-Bird: one egg in every clutch was infertile. Several old nests were found, like this one, with an addled egg. One nest contained a young bird and an addled egg, and in two nice pairs of eggs one was partly incubated and the other not so. It would be interesting to know if this occurs in the Otway, the true home of the species. There may be some food element lacking here.

The notes of the Bristle-Bird have a great likeness to those of the Pilot-Bird in being loud and melodious—the call-song is



almost identical in the two birds, except that one is in a sharper key. The Bristle-Birds feed on beetles, earth grubs, and cranberries, and could be photographed in their home with ease. The Bristle-Bird is found at Anglesea, and also at Airey's Inlet, two tidal creeks between Point Addis and the Otway forest. There appear now to be no further belts of tea-tree north of Point Addis into which the birds can spread, so this fact will always keep them a remarkable restricted colony, which we trust will be of perennial interest to bird observers, and which we hope (being the nearest Bristle-Birds to Melbourne) will not suffer decimation at the hands of city folk.—A. G. CAMPBELL.

[N.B.—This is additional to notes in *Emu*, January, 1907, page 134.—A. G. C.]

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NOTES ON AMYTIS (AMYTORNIS) VARIA, OR MARLOCK GRASS-WREN.—When walking through one of my paddocks on 13th June, 1908, hoping to get a shot with a 440 Winchester rifle at some Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*) that were killing lambs, my attention was attracted by what, at first glance, appeared to be a small banded ant-eater (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) running, as is their custom, at great speed with tail erect from some rough ground towards a clump of marlock scrub. A driving rain was falling at the time, which helped to form this impression, but immediately after a dark-coloured bird ran or fluttered close behind the supposed ant-eater, and then I knew I was watching something uncommon in bird-life. The clump of marlock was only about 12 yards by 2 yards, but a considerable amount of trampling heavily through it was necessary before the birds darted out from almost under my feet. One of them hopped on to a dead log at a short distance, and gave me a good view, for a moment or two, but, not thinking it any use to risk a shot with the 440, I hurried home (1½ miles) for my gun, but rain and wind increasing caused me to defer further investigations for that day. On three occasions shortly after the above date I systematically tramped all over the small stony hillock where the birds were first seen, but only once sighted them. They darted out of the same small patch of marlock as at first, after much trampling, and, coming out somewhat behind me, gave no chance of a shot. As with *Amytis striata* (which I had met in the north-west of this State), the speed of the birds is extraordinary. 21st June found me at the same locality, and almost immediately one bird was sighted in a fresh patch of marlock, but for some little time it gave no chance of a fair shot, and then disappeared in a tangle of fallen white gum limbs and dead leaves, which was surrounded by clumps of marlock in full bloom. Among these blooms numbers of *Meliphreptus brevirostris* (*leucogenys*, Milligan) were busily feeding, and a bullying Wattle-Bird (*Acanthochaera carunculata*) kept making angry dashes



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