

this season. One morning early this month, while crossing a bare gravelly hill close to the streets of Stawell, my attention was directed to the antics of a little Dottrel, which hobbled along in front, trailing an apparently broken wing. Watching it awhile from a distance, I found it made several runs towards a certain spot and away again. At this spot I discovered its nest, containing two young not long hatched and one egg. The site of this nest was in a most daring position. The hill was one of those shaft-riddled ridges of silurian shale so characteristic of the gold-mining areas of Victoria, being practically in the town and almost bare of vegetable growth of any kind, from the trafficking of boys, dogs, goats, and cows. The spot was not 200 yards from a main thoroughfare, but at least a quarter of a mile from the nearest water, which was a hillside dam. A photograph shows the site of the nest, among hard quartz gravel and shaley rock,, with nestlings and egg resting upon a little platform of smaller particles, mostly ironstone pebbles, apparently carried together by the parent birds, thus raising the nest an inch above the immediate surface of the ground. The nestlings were very quiet, and showed no inclination to run away. The under surface was conspicuously white, but was not seen as they crouched in the nest. The upper surface was a protective grey dappled with black, a white collar on the nape of the neck being distinctly seen in the picture.—A. G. CAMPBELL. Pomonal, January, 1909.

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WATERFOWL AND WEATHER.—A very interesting example of bad-weather prediction by wildfowl came under my notice while residing at Essendon, Victoria. There is a fine lake in that district which is frequented by Swans and Ducks, and one afternoon a friend and myself were astonished at the eccentric evolutions indulged in by the former. The Black Swans were turning somersaults in the water, lying on their backs with the head, neck, and upper part of body completely immersed, kicking both feet in the air, then righting themselves, only to repeat the performance; this they kept up for about an hour; while the Black Duck were chasing each other on the wing round the lake. My friend, who owns land in various parts of Victoria and is naturally a keen observer, remarked to me—"We shall have bad weather before long." Next morning came a fierce wind from the north-west, accompanied by a terrific dust storm, which enveloped the country as in a thick fog, and, penetrating the houses, lay thickly upon furniture, books, and papers. So strong were the squalls that a whole camp was overturned on the shores of Hobson's Bay. Shortly before noon the wind changed to south-west, the air became cool, and the dust settled down; then rain began, and lasted until early evening. Four days afterwards the Black Swans were again

indulging in their eccentric gambols, the day being agreeable, with a light south-westerly breeze. The same evening, however, the wind blew strongly in cold squalls, and next morning there was a high southerly wind, accompanied by a shower. The morning after there was an extremely high, cold wind, with heavy showers, and the night was cold enough for winter, although the season was midsummer. Thus on both occasions was the prediction of the waterfowl amply fulfilled, although at the time they were exhibiting these queer gymnastics the weather was beautifully fine, there being nothing to indicate to the ordinary mortal that a severe change was shortly to take place.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport (Tas.), 23/2/09.

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MIGRATORY NOTES FROM CLEVELAND, TASMANIA, 1908.—On the 20th February noticed a flock of seven Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chaetura caudacuta*) flying across and travelling north-east. Cold, snowy-feeling winds prevailed during several days of April, so our migratory birds disappeared rather suddenly.

12th June.—A pair of Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) seen bathing in waterhole. These Swallows, I believe, have spent the winter here, their chief haunt being some old stables.

16th August.—Fall of snow.

22nd August.—Many Swallows about.

29th August.—Tree-Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) have returned.

2nd September.—Heard Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) for first time. Swallows nesting.

10th September.—Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus parvirostris*) back to this district.

17th September.—Wood-Swallows (*Artamus sordidus*) seen for first time.

20th September.—Heard and saw Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), also Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx plagosus*).

23rd September.—The White-fronted Chat (*Ephthianura albifrons*), which had been absent from district for a year, returned.

Notes on Flame-breasted Robin (*Petroeca phænicea*).—As Mr. A. G. Campbell recently contributed a paper to *The Emu*, vol. viii., part 3, on the movements of the above bird, the two or three notes in my diary may be of interest:—12th June.—Flame-breasted Robins (*P. phænicea*) about. 23rd July.—Flame-breasted Robin in lovely plumage.

Brown Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigas*).—Re this acclimatized bird, I am pleased to state they have nested in this locality for the past two seasons. The flock now numbers about nine, and their merry laughter is frequently heard during the early morning and evening.—(MISS) J. A. FLETCHER.



Dove, H. Stuart. 1909. "Waterfowl and Weather." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 8(4), 217–218.

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