

a sanctuary. And all animals soon discover such localities. The park has only been proclaimed a few months, but already the wallabies can be seen occasionally in localities near the entrance, where they have not been seen for years.—CLIVE E. LORD (member National Park Board). Hobart, 17/8/18.

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Swifts and Weather.—The summer just past has been remarkable for its warmth and dryness. For practically six months we have had sunny, genial weather, very little wind, and only a few showers; and even now, entering the second week of May, the atmosphere is warm and the ground almost as dry as the proverbial chip. The season has also been remarkable for the absence of the Spine-tailed Swift (*Chætura caudacuta*) from our North-West Coast, in this forming a marked contrast with last summer (1917—see *Emu*, vol. xvii., p. 223), when the birds were seen all through February and March until the third week of April. During the present summer not one individual came within ken of either my friend Mr. Will Buck or myself. We both spend a great deal of time out of doors, and keep a constant look-out. I heard of the Swifts being seen on two occasions—once during first week of April between Don and Spreyton, and once the week following between Mersey Heads and Bluff; they must then have been leaving for the Northern Hemisphere.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport, Tasmania, 8/5/18.

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“Shamming Sick.”—An interesting episode was witnessed by a friend and self while driving through the Harford and New Ground districts recently. One part of the road was bordered by bush on one side and by a partly-cleared paddock on the other. A Dusky Robin (*Petroica vittata*) flew across from the bush, just in front of us, alighted at a hollow in a dry tree within the paddock, and instantly left, minus the grub which he had carried in his bill. I jumped out of the trap, and on reaching the tree found the female bird on the nest. Directly she caught sight of me she tumbled from the nest to the ground, fluttered along with the greatest difficulty, then on to a log, the length of which she progressed in the same painful fashion. On returning to the nest, I found she had been brooding two greenish-blue eggs with an orange tint at one end. The male bird, after feeding her on the nest, had flown to the side of a tall stump, where he clung while watching the farce of his mate leading away a “tenderfoot.” Our “Dusky” is quite as good at this acting business as is the familiar little White-fronted Chat.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport, Tas. 3/9/18.

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The “Whisper Song.”—Our trans-Pacific cousins have bestowed a good deal of attention of late years on that low, sweet melody uttered at certain seasons by certain species, and christened very

appropriately the "whisper song." Allusions to many kinds of birds which have been heard singing thus in various parts of North America may be found in the organ of the Audubon Society—*Bird-Lore*. My introduction to this class of song took place years ago, while living to the west of Table Cape, North-West Tasmania. One warm afternoon I was spending an hour in the garden which we had planted "on our selection," and in which the fruit-trees had grown to a fair size. A sweet melody, containing some rich notes, fell upon my ear; it gave the impression of a rather large bird singing in the distance, and I had listened to it for some time before it struck me that the performer might be closer at hand. I then traced it to a nut-bush only a couple of yards or so away, and on peering into this saw, ensconced in the shady centre of the bush, a White-eye (*Zosterops caeruleascens*) warbling away as if purely for his own enjoyment. So wrapped up was he in this quiet, inward melody that he took no notice of my presence, and I was able to enjoy the song for some minutes longer.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport, Tas., 14/8/18.

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Maternal Courage.—While walking at the Mersey Bluff, North-West Tasmania, during the first week of January, I noticed the nest of a Wood-Swallow (*Artamus sordidus*) in a small fork near the end of a pine branch, and went under the branch, which was 10 or 12 feet above the ground, to inspect. The sitting bird immediately left the nest, rose up in an oblique direction to a distance of about 15 feet from the branch, then swooped toward me, passing over my head and just missing the white helmet which I wore. The impetus of the descent carried her a good distance in the opposite direction, whence she returned to the first aerial position, swooped again (just missing my hat), and continued the manœuvre until I left the spot. This is the first time that I have known an *Artamus* come near to making an attack on a human being, much in the same way that the Skua does in the Shetlands of the north. A pair of Superb Warblers (*Malurus longicaudus*) built in my garden during December in some long grass about the stem of a small cherry tree, and laid four eggs during successive days. After incubation had proceeded awhile something disturbed the nest during one night, and in the morning the eggs were out on the grass just beneath. When I stooped to replace them, the female Warbler perched on the nest close to my hand, scolding away very heartily, and remained there until my retirement.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport, Tasmania, 27/2/18.

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White-tailed Black Terns (*Hydrochelidon leucoptera*) **in Western Australia.**—In *The Emu*, vol. xvii., p. 95, I recorded the visit of large numbers of these birds to South-Western Australia in March, April, and May, 1917. I described this occurrence as "a remark-



Dove, H. Stuart. 1918. "The "Whisper Song"." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 18(2), 133–134.

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