

of the Kookaburra, but with the aid of its wings it would nearly always prevent the snake from getting a coil around its neck and free itself quickly. On one occasion I noticed a pair of Kookaburras had a nest of young ones in the hollow of a dry tree; underneath the tree, in a small shrub growing on the bank of the stream, was a nest of the Black-and-White Fantail, with the female bird sitting on the eggs. After a time the young ones hatched, and I have watched the birds feed their young until they left the nest. Now, if the Kookaburra is such a demon as they class her on our small birds, why did she not take the young of the Fantail which was under her eyes constantly, not 20 feet away from where she had to procure food for her own young? I noticed also that small birds of several varieties were numerous around this locality, and they all seemed to rear their young and were never molested by the Kookaburra. I noticed that the Kookaburra feeds its young on grubs of all sorts, small snakes, mice, lizards, worms, and various other insects, but never on any occasion have I seen them bring a small bird to feed their young on.

From my personal observation of the Kookaburra and what I have seen of this bird I look upon it as most valuable as a snake-destroyer. For years I have had constant opportunities of studying its habits, so until I see him doing the mischief to small birds that he is supposed to do I will always look upon "Jacko" as one of my friends. I had an interview with Mr. D. Le Souëf on the subject of the Kookaburra destroying small birds. He is mostly of the same opinion as myself. I consider the Boobook Owl and the Butcher-Bird—or, as it is familiarly called, the "Derwent Jackass"—account for a good many small birds, and probably young, as well as the rats and mice they kill. I hope your Society will give the Kookaburra their best protection, and would be very sorry to see him classed as an outlaw.

An Unidentified Petroica (Australian Robin).

BY H. V. EDWARDS, BEGA, N.S.W.

A CONSIDERABLE time ago—about the eighties—I became acquainted, at Mittagong, N.S.W., some 70 miles south of Sydney, with a Robin which had the peculiar habit of nesting on piles of horse or cattle manure, or on clods of earth, and occasionally in the banks of creeks—never, to my knowledge, in a tree.

My interest in this bird was renewed by the publication, two or three years ago, in the *Sydney Mail*, of a nature story paragraph in which the peculiar nesting habit of this Robin was referred to. It was described as "one of the *Petroica* species," but neither specific name nor habitat was assigned it by the writer. The sexes are alike, and closely resemble the female of the Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica leggei*), but neither male nor female

has trace of colour in the breast. The nest is cup-shaped, and usually woven of soft stringy-bark, like that of the Scarlet-breast; eggs three in number, and greyish-white in colour, spotted with brown.

It has been suggested by experienced bird-observers that my Robin was a *Petroica* nesting out of breeding plumage. This suggestion is negatived by the fact that the *Petroicas* do not nest in this peculiar manner, and that the nest of my bird was found several times about Mittagong, in open timbered country, and about creeks in the ranges. Further, the Robin to which I refer has a strikingly large eye, tinged, I think, with pale yellowish-white.

It was also suggested that the bird might be the Scrub-Robin (*Drymodes brunneipygius*), but it does not even faintly resemble this species, and the Scrub-Robin does not nest in this peculiar fashion, while the Tasmanian Dusky Robin does not come so far north, and, further, in breeding habits and other points does not answer to the description.

I fancied I afterwards saw this apparently unidentified Robin about creeks adjacent to the Snowy River, in southern Monaro, but am not sure. On first discovering a pair of these Robins, which, from their behaviour, evidently had a nest close at hand, I searched on trees, stumps, &c.—everywhere, in fact, but the right quarter. Eventually, the persistence of the birds in returning again and again to a heap of cow manure induced me to examine it, the nest being found built on the highest part of the pile.

A New Trait of the Goldfinch.

By H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., DEVONPORT, TAS.

MR. Arthur Mattingley's pleasant note on the Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) in *The Emu*, vol. xviii., p. 209, was read with much interest. Many times have we watched this spruce little Honey-eater poised before a bunch of fuchsia or salvia blossom, dipping his slender, curved bill into each flower while remaining suspended on rapidly-vibrating wings. From this clever device the bird is often known, not inaptly, as the "Tasmanian Humming-Bird." But a few weeks ago I was much surprised to see that the introduced Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) was learning a similar trick for obtaining sustenance. Some white cornflowers (*Centaurea cyaneus*, var.) had protruded their heads through a picket fence, and a Goldfinch, in the absence of any support on which he could place his feet, was suspended on the wing while pulling with his beak at the florets in order to obtain the ovules at the base of these. This Finch is exceedingly fond of the cornflower seed, whether immature or ripe, and it is difficult to collect any from the plants when a flock of this handsome species is in



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