

part of the year. One will at times see a single Yellow-tuft fly into a tree and start calling, and as many as 20 or 30 of the same species will flock round him and sit with expanded wings or flit about uttering a short note, evidently holding a sort of council meeting—a phase of action noted in many species of this family.

White-bearded Honey-eater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*).—This species is somewhat nomadic, and changes its habits according to the flowering season of the eucalypts and banksias. It is numerous in Centennial Park, and may be seen in dozens among the low coastal scrubs at the Little Bay Hospital.

The Diamond-Sparrow or Spotted-sided Finch (*Stagonopleura guttata*) is often numerous in the comparatively open country of some of the outlying suburbs.

Red-browed Finch (*Egintha temporalis*).—The pretty little "Red-head" is always present in Ashton and Taronga Parks and other places, where it nests freely, often close to crowded thoroughfares. It keeps to the timbered areas.

Crow (*Corvus coronoides*).—A pair of Crows live in the suburb of Mosman, and each year rear a family. They chiefly live in Ashton Park, but are often seen over the harbour and city.

Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus destructor*).—There are generally a few of these carollers about the parks and gardens, but they do not seem to stay in one spot for very long. One year they reared two young ones in Double Bay. One day the beautiful song of a Butcher-Bird was heard, and shortly afterwards the same bird's voice was a fierce shriek of anger, and the bird was seen giving battle to an Indian Turtle-Dove, which was trying to defend its young. The Dove was soon vanquished, and fell limply to the ground, where it crouched, dazed. The Butcher-Bird then took each of the young Doves in turn from the nest, dashed them against the branch of a tree, and threw their bodies to the ground.

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## Food Pellets of Kingfishers.

By REG. HAYS, R.A.O.U., SENTRY BOX, BUNDARRA, N.S.W.

AMONGST the many Australian birds that "void" their "undigested food matter," none, perhaps, surpasses the Laughing Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigas*), either in quantity or variety of the contents. Having been particularly interested in this subject lately, I find that the Laughing Kingfishers collect in companies of 6, 8, 10, or more after sunset to have their last good old laugh of the day, perched side by side on some horizontal branch of a particular tree (generally the highest in the vicinity); there they also sleep for the night. This selected site is used by the same birds every night, and, as they void most of their undigested food pellets at night (although I have seen them do it in the day time), these pellets form quite a mound of the most varied accumulation of bones, insect remains, &c. One of these mounds (photograph

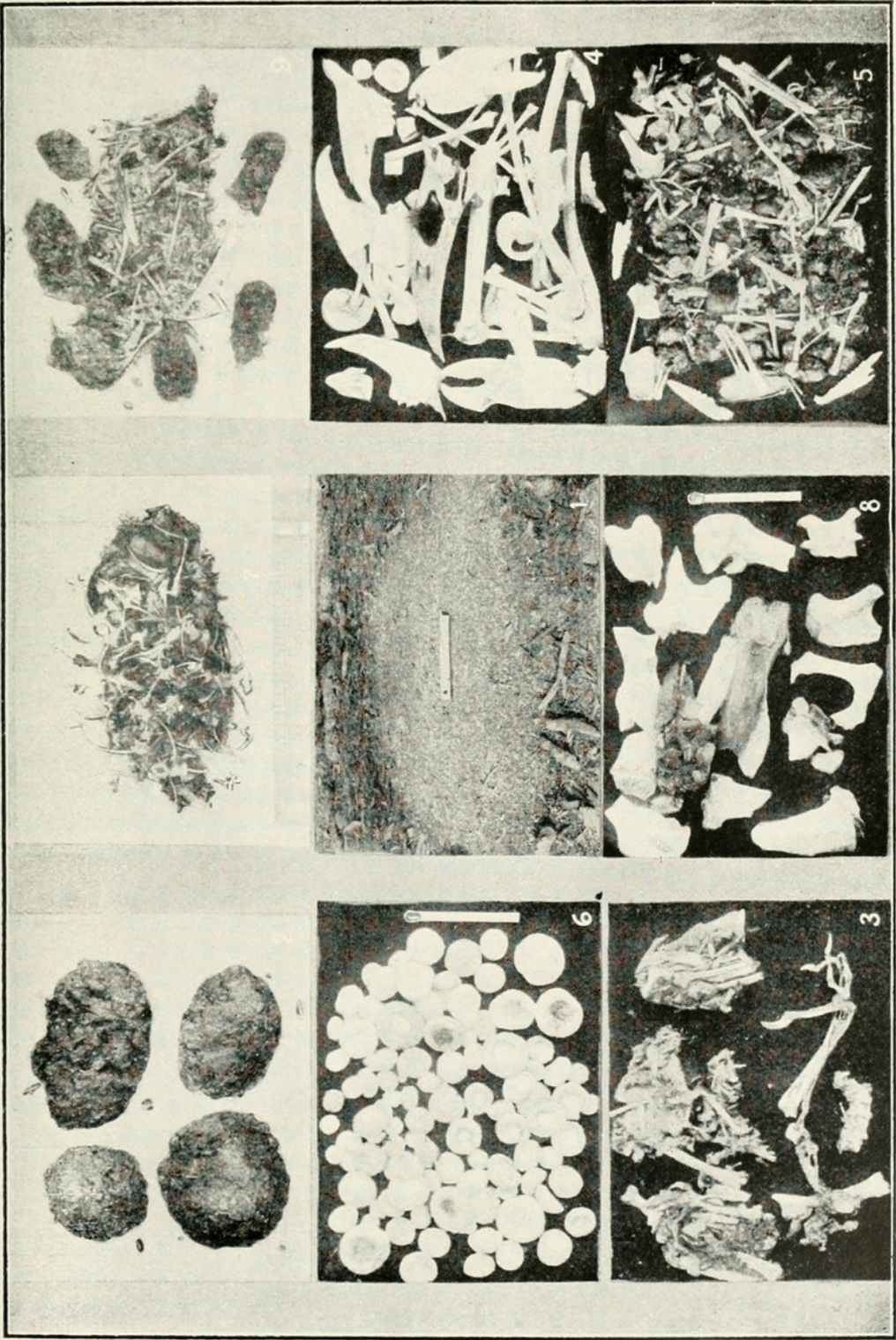


No. 1), found on J. B. Sandiland's place, Roumalla, Uralla, is 5 feet in diameter and 2 to 3 inches in depth, and must have taken months, perhaps years, to form. Others found have not been quite so large, but were just as interesting. Photograph No. 2 shows some fresh pellets before they have broken up with the weather. Photograph No. 3 shows pellets composed mostly of birds' bones, one bird's leg still being intact. Photograph No. 4 is of some large bones picked up from different mounds, showing what large bones, &c., they can swallow. The Crow's jaw in the centre, also pieces of rabbits' jaws and crayfish claws still intact, are easily seen. Photograph No. 5 is siftings washed from a couple of handfuls of pellets from the mound in photograph No. 1, showing the variety of contents. Photograph No. 6 shows the lime pellets ("crabs' eyes") which are found in the heads of "fresh-water crayfish," first swallowed by the Kingfisher, then voided up in the food pellets, and afterwards picked up on the mounds. I have picked up 70 of these on the one mound, showing what great destroyers of "crayfish" these birds are. Photograph No. 7 is a single pellet just breaking up; it contains the whole indigestible remains of a lizard, picked up on the mound shown in photograph No. 1. Photograph No. 8 shows some rabbit bones (chopped up) which I had fed to some birds (tame, about the house), and later collected from the mound over which they sleep. Photograph No. 9 contains pellets of the Red-backed Kingfisher (*Halcyon pyrrhopygius*) and some siftings washed from broken-up pellets, showing how similar, in smaller form, the contents are to that of the Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*). Gould mentions in his "Handbook on Australian Birds," vol. i., page 140, concerning the Blue Kingfisher (*Alcyon azurea*), that the hole occupied by this bird when nesting is often almost filled up with the bones of small fish, which are discharged from the *throat*, and piled up round the young in the form of a nest. I feel sure most of these bones are voided by the *young*, as the Red-backed Kingfishers do, only the latter drop them out of the nest at the entrance. Pellets shown in photograph No. 9 were found there when the young were only two weeks old. Of course, the old bird may drop some when sitting on the eggs. From this it seems reasonable to suppose that all the Kingfisher family void "food pellets," though as yet I have not found that the Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) does so.

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**The Chestnut-shouldered Grass-Parrot near Sydney.**—I am glad to be able to report the appearance of a small flock of Chestnut-shouldered Grass-Parrots (*Euphema pulchella*) in the Camden district, near Sydney. The last bird of this species of which I have record was offered for sale in Sydney about seven years ago; it had then been 22 years in an aviary.—A. S. LE SOUËF. Taronga Park, Sydney, N.S.W., 8/9/20.





The Contents of Food Pellets of Kingfishers.  
Note the foot-rule on the mound in 1.



Hays, Reg. 1920. "Food Pellets of Kingfishers." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 20(2), 91–92.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/mu920091>.

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