

for possible nests. When some 400 yards north of the Boronia Road Bridge, I saw a pair of Eastern Shrike-Tits systematically examining the trees which line the creek. In the hope that they were gathering food to feed to young birds I kept them under close observation.

Eventually, one of the birds started to examine a dead Black Wattle, *Acacia mearnsii*. When it reached the lower central section of the tree it paused, jumped round in the opposite direction, looked up, flew nearly vertically two feet, and broke off the end of a twig with its bill. The twig was about one and a half to two inches long, and one half the thickness of a pencil. The bird dropped back to its original position, with the twig held sideways in its beak. It then inserted the twig twice into a crevice in the branch with a sideways movement of the head. The twig was then dropped and, with its beak, the bird extracted something which it ate. The second bird joined it and they both flew off immediately and were lost to view.

Observing conditions were ideal. The sun was shining over my left shoulder directly onto the bird, which was no more than 12 feet from the ground. I was using 8 x 50 binoculars, from less than 30 feet away.

These observations indicated that this was a deliberate action which had been practised previously. Before breaking off the twig the bird made no attempt to probe with its beak. There was no hesitation in any of its movements and the whole manoeuvre occupied five or six seconds.

It is suggested that, in future, particular attention be given to the feeding habits and actions of the Eastern Shrike-Tit.

(Mrs.) Beryl Richards, Mitcham, Victoria, 20/2/1971.

Incubation and Fledging Periods. A recent search of the available literature revealed to me that the incubation and fledging periods of the majority of Australian birds are unrecorded and, therefore, probably unknown. Eventually the R.A.O.U. Nest Record Scheme will remedy this, but if my own records are any guide this will not be a short term result. The amateur bird observer fitting in his nest-finding at week-ends, cannot make the daily visits to nests which are essential to pinpoint the periods to a minimum of 24 hours accuracy.

Prompted by my failure in the literature I referred to my own records kept since 1964 and from the 350 cards was able to glean the following information. This information is derived only from nests in which the exact date of laying of the last egg, the hatching of young and the departure of the young was deduced, not by assumption, but by daily visits during the critical periods of laying and hatching. This still allows an error of 24 hours but this is probably accurate enough for all practicable purposes, particularly as both incubation and fledging periods are subject to natural variation.

With the exception of those of the White-cheeked Honeyeater and the Flame Robin, which were recorded at Katoomba, all records were made in the Buronga district in far south-western New South Wales.

Australian Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus*. Incubation period 30 days (1). Fledging period 32 days (1).

Boobook Owl, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*. Fledging period 36 days (1). The exact date of hatching of this bird was known and it flew strongly from the nest with the adult bird when I visited the nest. The clutch in this nest was of 2 eggs, the second egg being laid at least six days after the first. The second young bird left the nest not more than four days after the first.

Welcome Swallow, *Hirundo neoxena*. Incubation period 14 days (1). This was a somewhat unnatural nest in that it was built in late April and the birds fed nocturnally under artificial lighting.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, *Coracina novaehollandiae*. Fledging period 22 days (1). In common with most Cuckoo-Shrike nests that I have known this nest gradually fell to pieces under the stress of wind and the weight of the young birds. The actual time spent in the nest may vary with the life-period of the nest itself!

Ground Cuckoo-Shrike, *Pteropodocys maxima*. Fledging period 29 days (1). This nest also blew apart, two-thirds of it only being left 21 days after hatching when one bird was dead below the nest-tree, apparently having been killed by a predator; 28 days after hatching the surviving bird was seen clinging to the bare remnants of the nest, which was disintegrating rapidly in gale force winds. Next day the nest was gone and the young bird was a quarter of a mile from the nest flying strongly.

Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus stentoreus*. Incubation period 12 days (1). Fledging period 10 days (3). This bird consistently leaves the nest before it can fly. The young cling tenaciously to and climb the reed stems, travelling many yards from the nest in a matter of hours. Disturbance is not the cause of this very early departure from the nest.

Orange Chat, *Epthianura aurifrons*. Incubation period 11 days (1).

Jacky Winter, *Microeca leucophaea*. Fledging period 17 days (1).

Flame Robin, *Petroica phoenicea*. Incubation period 15 days (3), 17 days (1). The latter incubation took place at a time when Katoomba was almost continuously shrouded in fog and rain. The eggs were often found quite chilled and it was apparent the female was forced to leave the nest for long spells to supplement the feed the male was obtaining for her in insufficient quantities. In a later clutch this female reduced the period to 15 days. Fledging period 18 days (1).

Willie Wagtail, *Rhipidura leucophrys*. Incubation period 13 days (1), 14 days (1). Fledging period 15 days (1).

White-cheeked Honeyeater, *Phylidonyris niger*. Incubation period 13 days (1). Fledging period 15 days (1).

White-winged Cough, *Corcorax melanorhamphus*. Fledging period recorded as 21, 22, 23, 27, 28 and 29 days. The Cough always leaves the nest before capable of flight, sometimes in the case of a crowded nest this departure appears unintended, but even so the young survive well, being gifted with a strong pair of running legs. About 28 days is probably the usual time for a normal departure.

Black-winged Currawong, *Strepera melanoptera*. Incubation period 20 days (1).

Black-backed Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen*. Incubation period 21 days (1). Fledging period 30 days (1), 31 days (1), 33 days (1).

Little Crow, *Corvus bennetti*. Incubation period 16 days (1), 17 days (3), 18 days (1). Fledging period 29 days (1), 30 days (4).

Little Raven, *Corvus mellori*. Fledging period 35 days (1).

J. N. Hobbs, Katoomba, New South Wales 9/3/1971

Incubation period of the eggs of the Brolga. During October and November, 1966, a pair of Brolgas, *Grus rubicundus*, nested in the Kerang district of the Murray Valley, in the northern part of Victoria.

These birds are rare in this area and seldom are recorded nesting.

They were kept under close observation, without interference, and a record was obtained of the dates of the laying and hatching of the two eggs.

The first egg was laid on October 8 and the second egg on October 10. Both birds brooded continuously from the laying of the full clutch.

Hatching began on November 7, when a chicken emerged from the first egg, and this was followed, the next day, by the second young bird.

The actual time of the incubation was 30 days for the first egg, and 29 days for the second egg. However, as the first egg was not brooded immediately after laying, the incubation period was between 28 and 29 days.

H. J. Frith, in *Birds in the Australian High Country*, states that "the incubation period is about thirty-two days".

V. T. Lowe, Mystic Park, Victoria, 26/9/1970.

Pink Robin in Queensland. On July 11, 1971, a group of Pittsworth naturalists came out to "Karinya V" farm ten miles from Pittsworth, and two miles from Irongate, to walk in the Belah, *Casuarina cristata* scrub, which has been fenced from stock.

With Mr. and Mrs. Keith Turpin and two of their children, I took a short cut home. At 2.30 p.m., near the edge of the scrub, we saw a male Pink Robin, *Petroica rodinogaster*, and watched it for several minutes, while it perched in Belah, flew down to pick up food on the ground and flew up into the branches again.

It was an all-black robin on the upper parts, except for the small white patch on its forehead. There was no sign of white on its