Unusual Nest-site of Regent Honeyeater

The Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia* nests in trees, sometimes as low as 1 m but usually much higher and in the canopy. The commonest sites of the several hundred nests that we have observed have been on a mistletoe haustorium, in a stout vertical fork or on a horizontal or near-horizontal limb supported by small upright twigs. We have not previously seen the unusual sites that have been documented elsewhere such as behind peeling bark, on a rafter of an open shed, in the top of a fence post, and so on (Higgins *et al.* 2001).

On 9 and 11 October 2001 a pair of Regent Honeyeaters was seen carrying nesting material into the hollow top of a vertical dead tree-stump six metres high. The nest-site was among Mugga Ironbarks *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* at the Coonoor Road turnoff on the Bundarra–Barraba road 90 km west of Armidale, New South Wales (30°17′S, 150°45′E; Ley & Williams 1994). The nest was placed about 30 cm down inside the stump and the nesting material, which we could not identify, was visible through a vertical fissure in the side (Plate 50).

Unusual nest-site in dead stump (indicated by arrow) of Regent Honeyeater near Armidale, N.S.W.: above – location of stump amongst Mugga Ironbarks; below – detailed nest-site, with Regent Honeyeater perched above the nest.

Plate 50

The nest was inactive by 31 October which means that the nesting attempt was apparently unsuccessful, given that the time from egg-laying to fledging is about 28–30 days for the Regent Honeyeater (Higgins *et al.* 2001).

We thank Yvonne and Leon Taylor who saw the birds building the nest and took the photos and who drew our attention to the site, and Damon Oliver who commented on a draft.

References

Higgins, P.J., Peter, J.M. & Steele, W.K. (Eds) (2001), *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, vol. 5, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Ley, A.J. & Williams, M.B. (1994), 'Breeding behaviour and morphology of the Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*', *Australian Bird Watcher* **15**, 366–376.

ANDREW J. LEY[1], SHIRLEY M. COOK[2] *and* M.B. WILLIAMS[3]

[1]*19 Lynches Road, Armidale, N.S.W. 2350*
[2]*4 Virginia Close, Armidale, N.S.W. 2350*
[3]*5 Duval Street, Armidale, N.S.W. 2350*

Received 11 November 2001 ■

The Taking of a Dead Prickly Toadfish *Contusus brevicaudas* by a White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

A dead toadfish, later identified to be a Prickly Toadfish *Contusus brevicaudas* from Hutchins & Swainston (2001), was observed washed ashore on a beach approximately 300 m south of Camel Rock, Wallaga Lake near Bermagui, New South Wales (36°22'S, 150°05'E), at approximately 1030 h on 4 January 2002. The fish was approximately 20 cm in length, appeared to be relatively fresh, and was likely to have died sometime in the preceding 24 hours.

At 1115 h, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* was observed soaring north along the shoreline at a height of about 30 m and disappearing out of view behind Camel Rock. Approximately 15 minutes later the Sea-Eagle returned, gliding back south along the coast. Although not initially obvious to the observer, it had spotted the dead fish, continued to glide slightly south and proceeded to do a slow 'u-turn' inland, and slowly dropped with its wings in the soaring position as described in Marchant & Higgins (1993). The Sea-Eagle secured the fish in both feet without landing before again heading north past Camel Rock and out of sight. The site is a popular swimming area, and the fish was only 20 m away from the observer and up to six other people when taken.

Smith (1985) reported the presence of toadfishes (Tetraodontidae) and pufferfishes (Diodontidae) at combined White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* roosts, and identified the Stars and Stripes Toadfish *Arothron hispidus* to the species level. Savory (1989) also noted the presence of Porcupinefish *Dicotylichtys* sp. at Sea-Eagle nests. As noted by Smith (1985) and Hutchins & Swainston (2001), these fish have highly toxic skin and internal organs.

This appears to be the first record of White-bellied Sea-Eagles taking Prickly Toadfish. Furthermore, although Debus (1998) noted that spiny and poisonous