

### Observations on the Nankeen Kestrel and the Red-chested Quail.

During the early part of November, 1961, while harvesting was in progress on our farm, some birds were attracted by the insects that were disturbed by the machines. Nankeen Kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) and other species of birds flew around the machines and Red-chested Quails (*Turnix pyrrhorthorax*) were sometimes flushed from the crop.

Nearing the corner of the crop with the harvester I disturbed one of the Quail which flew a few yards and then dropped into the stubble. As I turned out into the stubble I saw the bird on the ground. Suddenly, a Nankeen Kestrel swooped on to the bird, but it was immediately scared off by the oncoming machine.

I stopped the harvester and tried to get a close look at the Quail. It was in such a frightened state that it almost allowed me to touch it before it ran a few feet out of my reach. After several advances it gained sufficient courage to fly 20 yards and land in the cover of thrashed heads and straw. Immediately, the Kestrel hovered over the spot where the Quail had dropped and remained for two minutes, at a height of a few feet above the ground, before flying away. It would have been interesting to have seen the outcome of the struggle for survival but the oncoming machine scared the Kestrel away.

In early December, 1959, I noticed a Kestrel "hawking" insects over a patch of pine trees. It was flying at a height of about 25 feet above the ground. When approaching an insect the bird would balance almost upright, on its outspread tail and wings and catch the insect with its open talons. While still flying the Kestrel would then reach under its body with its bill and take the insect from its talons.

While ploughing during late December, 1959, I saw a Red-chested Quail with four young birds who were apparently only a day or two old. Stopping the tractor I caught one of the young birds to examine it, whereupon it emitted feeble chicken-like notes. The parent left the other chicks and came to within 2 feet of me and kept walking back and forth in an agitated manner. I caught the remaining youngsters, and the adult bird then approached within a few inches of my extended closed hands which contained the chicks. It tried to entice them away with a few soft notes and by walking a short distance. When I let the chicks go they followed the parent over the rough ground into the cover of the stubble. There was only one adult bird with the chicks and although I looked for a second parent bird I could not locate one.

When flushed by a tractor, harvester, or other machine, these Quail fly only short distances before dropping to cover. At other times I have seen a machine pass over a bird as it sat motionless.

—Lloyd Nielsen, *Jandowae, Queensland, 18/2/1961.*

