

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Birds at the New Causeway Construction.**—Early in November (1952), the suction dredge was working the river at the eastern end of the new Swan River Causeway, and discharging its silt on the north side close to the Great Eastern Highway side of the circus. A flock of about 300 Silver Gulls (*Larus novae-hollandiae*) was patiently waiting for the food items that came to light when the discharged silt settled. Behind them and in a distinct flock were about 100 White-headed Stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*).

—W. BAGGS, Victoria Park.

**Use of the Upper Nest of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill.**—In the only references I have, Cayley and Serventy and Whittell, it is stated that there is no direct evidence of the use of the upper construction of the nest of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill (chigaree, coastal chickaree, local chipparee, *Acanthiza ehryssorrhoea*).

Don Dowsett, aged 13, a reliable observer, noticed a pair with their second clutch of three eggs. The male was settled right down in the top compartment. On being disturbed he flew out uttering a continuous warning of "cheps." The female emerged at once and flew off, but in silence. Later when the eggs were hatched, Don Dowsett, late at night with a torch made sure the bird was occupying the top compartment. This time he made no attempt to escape or to warn and the light was switched off at once.

The top nest is deep, some 3 in., with a trough leading off in the opposite direction to the lower opening. If finished like the lower nest it would form a tunnel exit.

—HERBERT BERRY, Government School, Wandering.

**Field Diaries of F. Lawson Whitlock.**—Members of the Naturalists' Club will be interested to learn that the notebooks maintained by our veteran ornithologist and honorary member, Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock, were handed over by him to me, and I have now deposited them in the Archives Department of the Public Library, Perth. Here they will be available for reference by interested students. The notebooks represented are as follows: Expedition to Lake Way (July 1 to August 31, September 1 to December 6, 1909). Notes in connection with the Lake Way trip (July to December, 1909), Shark Bay (June 8 to October 19, 1920). Nullarbor Plain (June 24 to November 7, 1921). Fortescue River (July 16 to November 21, 1922). Central Australia (March 16 to November 7, 1923). Kimberley, Fitzroy River (May 14, 1924 to April 20, 1925). Bunbury diary (January 1, 1948 to December 31, 1950). Among the documents there is also a copy of Robert Hall's *Key to the Birds of Australia and Tasmania*, 1899, with copious manuscript notes inserted by Mr. Whitlock.

—H. M. WHITTELL, Bridgetown.

**Size of the Rock Python.**—In L. Glauert's *Handbook of the Snakes of Western Australia*, 1950, it is stated that the rock or water python (*Liasis olivaceus*) attains a length of about 6 feet.

J. R. Kinghorn, *The Snakes of Australia*, 1929, gives 5 or 6 ft. as the maximum length. However the species grows to a much larger size but as precise measurements of these reptiles are not often recorded it may be of interest to set down particulars of two specimens recently examined by Mr. N. E. Stewart and myself. These two were killed at Keane's rockhole on The Hooley Station, in the Roebourne Tableland, on December 6, 1952. One specimen measured 12 feet when stretched out and weighed 19 lb.; the other was 12 ft. 1 in. and weighed 20½ lb. Both were males, had empty stomachs and were in very fat condition. The pythons were lying submerged in the water of the pool when first discovered. We were informed that considerably larger specimens are met with. F. Lawson Whitlock in his account of a visit to Millstream Station on the Fortescue River (*The Emu*, vol. 22, 1923, p. 272) describes killing an 11 ft. specimen and mentions that pythons up to 18 ft. in length have been obtained.

The name of the rock python among the local natives (the Injee-bundee people) is "pug-oon-jee."

—D. L. SERVENTY, Nedlands.

**Re-discovery of *Hyperoedesipus plumosus* at Moondyne Spring.**

—During a trip down the Avon River at Easter 1952 our party went across the valley range to Moondyne Spring, situated on a tributary of the Avon about 30 miles from Perth. Here we collected a small crustacean which, on later examination by Mr. K. Sheard, proved to be the rare underground Phreatoicid isopod, *Hyperoedesipus plumosus*, hitherto known only from the type locality, a small pool just below the Lesmurdie Falls (Nicholls and Milner, *Journ. & Proc. Roy. Soc., W.A.*, vol. 10, 1924, pp. 23-24).

The circumstances of the original discovery suggested to the authors that *Hyperoedesipus* was "a subterranean form, which gets carried from crevices underground by the rush of water during the rainy season." It was found on two separate occasions in August 1923 and despite searches in later years was only found again in the same place in 1941 (G. E. Nicholls, "The Phreatoicoidea, Part 1," *Papers & Proc. Roy. Soc. Tasmania for 1942*, 1943, p. 56).

Moondyne Spring is bare of any plant growth, except for a clump of rushes at the outlet end. There is a large bed of bracken above and flooded gum saplings surround but do not over-shadow it. Water bubbles up from the ground in a number of holes both within and just outside of the main pool, and it was in one of these holes, about 15 in. in diameter, that the little crustaceans were found. As the water was muddy I dug out the hole a little deeper, to obtain clear water, and in doing so became aware of the Phreatoicids, which were quite plentiful. About 60 specimens were collected in less than a quarter of an hour. Some of them were whitish-translucent whilst others were of a brownish-olive tint. It is suggested that the former were individuals which were of truly subterranean habit whilst the pigmented ones were living as burrowers in the bottom mud.

—W. H. BUTLER, Inglewood.