

## A Fly Parasite Of Birds

The following request for specimens and/or information is made by Mr. John H. Ardley, Entomologist, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, University of Sydney.

In Australia there is one species of fly, *Pas-seromyia longicornis* (Macquart) which parasitises many species of birds and is therefore known as the "Australian Bird Screw-worm Fly". The eggs are usually deposited under the wings of nestlings and the larvae (maggots) disperse over the body, pierce the skin and commence to feed on the young birds. The maggot moves under the skin, leaving its posterior end protruding slightly. The time taken to reach maturity is six days. The fully developed maggots leave the bird and pupate in the lining of the nest, or drop to the ground.

The following birds have been recorded as hosts:—

Goldfinch, Fairy Martin, Lyrebird, Yellow-winged Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater,

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Brush Wattlebird, Rufous Whistler, Willie Wagtail and a Pardalote.

A heavy infestation of nestlings may lead to death. The maggots will be noticed protruding under the skin more particularly so on the head. The known distribution of this parasite is Tasmania and eastern Australia.

Should anybody observe these parasites in nestlings during the spring I should be glad to receive specimens in 75% alcohol, or if a convenient sighting is made in the Sydney area, to be informed so that live material could be examined. Contact can be made by ringing 68-4514 business hours, or 47-2561 weekends, etc.

The object of the request is to establish a collection of this interesting bird parasite and to describe the maggot stages, at present barely known to science.

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## Trapping Kookaburras

The Bal-Chatr trap has already been proven as one of the most effective methods for catching raptors throughout the world. Fundamentally, this trap consists of a wire cage into which the bait—generally a mouse—is placed. Around the outside of the cage numerous nooses made from fishing line are tied. When the raptor strikes, its talons become entangled in the nooses, and the bird is held to the ground by a weight which is wired to the bottom of the trap. See S. G. Lane's article in this issue.

Recently, while driving near Wallacia, N.S.W., a pair of Kookaburras (*Dacelo gigas*), was observed perched on telegraph wires beside the road. The trap was placed approximately thirty yards from the nearest bird, and the car was driven about fifty yards distant. Almost immediately both Kookaburras moved to a position on

the wires directly above the trap, and within a few minutes one bird was on the ground beside it.

The nature of the Kookaburra's attack on the mouse is, of course, different from that of the raptors which strike at the "bait" feet first, whereas the Kookaburra attempts to jab through the wire with its heavy bill. When this proves unsuccessful, the bird usually hops onto the top of the trap where it is snared. When handled, most Kookaburras emit an extremely loud, high-pitched screech. This noise attracts others and, if allowed to continue, a number will congregate in the vicinity.

This method has proven successful on several occasions, but the number of birds which can be caught at the one location is usually limited to one or two. Adaptations of this trap can be devised; for example, the trap could be positioned on a large piece of wire-mesh pegged to the ground. With more nooses tied to this piece of wire, over which the bird would have to walk, the yield of the trap would be increased considerably or the trapping time reduced. Any banders who try this, or other methods of catching Kookaburras, are invited to write to the author.

—Rod Anderson,  
Flat 1, 226 Sydney Rd., Fairlight, N.S.W.

## BIRD IN THE HAND

### References

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Summers-Smith, J. D. (1963), "The House Sparrow", Collins, London.  
Witherby, H. F. and Others (1940, reprinted 1958), "Hand Book of British Birds", London.