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SHORT NOTE

DOLLAR-BIRD NEAR DARGAVILLE

A Dollar Bird or Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus orientalis* was on or around Mr. Clive Wood's farm in Waihue Valley, nine miles north of Dargaville, from 3rd to 16th May 1971. Mr. and Mrs. Wood watched it periodically during its stay; on 6th May I spent two periods totalling three hours closely observing the bird with 10 x 50 binoculars and a x 30 telescope at ranges down to 30 feet, in good light.

The farm on which the Dollar Bird was observed is pasture land with totara trees singly or in clumps. The bird was first sighted perched on a gatepost and some days later was noticed by passers-by on a fence-post not far away. Its usual feeding perches were the "cups" on the crossbars of power and telephone poles close to the homestead. For the first few days it used these high perches regularly from about 1000-1400 hours and again from 1600-1800 hours, by which latter time it was nearly dark. Heavy rain which fell one day made no difference to the bird's routine. After some days the duration of its visits decreased but it still came twice daily. Its habit was to sit motionless for periods of 5-15 minutes; at intervals it flew, first sideways and downwards, then round in a wide arc of 90-100 feet ending with an upward swoop back to a perch. At other times of day it was observed to perch on a dead limb of a gum tree about 60 feet above ground, on a 15 foot dead sapling, and on a power line. No record of any call. Flight buoyant, wing beats strong but fairly slow; in flight the wings are broad but taper sharply towards the tip and the "dollar" marks, barely visible on the closed wing, are clearly seen. The black tail, square-ended at rest, is spread at take-off and landing. When perched the bird has a short-necked stocky appearance; the large head, flattened on the crown, large brown eye under heavy brows and broad flattened bill with upper mandible slightly hooked at the tip are noticeable field features; the reddish feet are usually hidden. Length about 12 inches. Head brownish, upper surface brownish green, wing coverts greenish blue; "dollar" patches on the primaries white with a bluish tinge. Bristly green feathers on chin; a striking bright blue streak on throat; under surface green, tinged smudgy brownish on breast. The dusky brown bill with only a very small but detectable reddish area at the base of the lower mandible indicated that the bird was not fully mature.

Photographs, though not suitable for reproduction, show the bird on, leaving and returning to its perch, and have been inspected by Mr. F. C. Kinsky, Dominion Museum. I am grateful to Mr. A. T. Edgar for discussions during preparation of this note, and to Mr. Kinsky for his comments on the draft. — C. D. CLUNIE