

has observed pelicans in Queensland and has no doubts about her identification; she was able to watch the bird swimming and feeding in the muddy shallows, for part of the time with its whole body submerged except for the curve of its back and its crown which showed above the water surface. This was her only sighting; though diligently searched for over the following days and weeks the bird was not seen again.

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AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR BY FEMALE BLACKBIRD

My suburban garden is bounded by a hedge, with a central gate opening on to a public footpath, on which children sometimes play. In 1976-77 season the garden was breeding territory for a pair of Blackbirds, which built three nests in the hedge. Nest material was being carried to an escallonia bush on 8 September 1976, the first egg was laid on 13 September, a clutch of four eggs was complete on the 16th and hatched on 28-29 September; the chicks were fed by both parents. On the morning of 6 October the nest was empty, probably the result of cat predation; only one dead chick was found.

Building of the second nest started on 9 October in a privet bush on the other side of the gate. Two eggs had been laid by 0745 hours on 14 October; the full clutch of five was confirmed on the 19th and hatched on 29 October. On 5 November the hen was seen on the nest with her wings spread to shield the chicks from heavy rain; the chicks left the nest on 12 November.

The hen had shown no signs of undue alarm during my inspections of the first nest or of the second nest up to 6 November; but on the evening of the 9th when I attempted to check the nest contents (chicks then 11 days old) she attacked, striking me a sharp blow on the right shoulder. After the attack she landed on the concrete path, scolding me, and followed me round the house till I went inside. Later the same evening when outside to the other end of the section she was perched in a cherry tree and again started to "buzz" me till I went inside. At midday on 10 November when I walked along the path past the nest she flew towards me from a perch on a power line across the road and at 1245 hours when I looked at the nest on my way back to work she attacked, striking me on the head behind my right ear. She displayed no hostility to other members of the family, but up to the evening of 12 November when the chicks left the nest, my presence near the nest or even showing myself at a window overlooking the garden produced signs of aggression. Unfortunately I had to pass the nest site at least four times each day. The male bird showed no aggression and the hen ignored me after the chicks had left the nest.

Only two of the five fledglings survived their second night in the open; they were seen frequently with both parents in attendance and on 26 November were finding food for themselves but still being fed, particularly by the male parent.

A third nest was built in a privet bush about 2 metres from Nest 1, but few details are available. Building must have started soon after the chicks had fledged from Nest 2, for on 15 November the nest was empty, with a chick about one week old dead on the ground about one metre from the hedge.

Nest 3 was used again. A clutch of 5 eggs was noted on 28 December 1976 but laying must have started shortly after the loss of clutch 3, as 5 chicks hatched on 4 January 1977. On 11 January when the chicks were a week old the hen again attacked me, hitting me on the head when I inspected the nest. Two chicks were found dead on the lawn on 12 January, one on the 15th and one later, when the nest was empty, with no sign of the fifth chick. Cause of death is unknown; all the dead chicks were in good condition, and no insecticides are used in the garden.

The parent birds remained in their territory until winter. A female blackbird was found dead in the garden on 7 June 1977 and about ten days later another female appeared.

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ACCIDENTAL DISPERSAL OF THE WELCOME SWALLOW THROUGH "HITCH-HIKING" ON SHIPS

Although stragglers had been recognised earlier at infrequent intervals (Oliver 1955, Fall *et al.* 1970), it is generally accepted that the first successful colonisation in New Zealand by the Australian Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) followed its 1958 invasion of Northland (Edgar 1966). Since then numbers have increased dramatically. It is now a common sight about North Auckland (see Munro 1969, 1973) and widely established in Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Wairarapa, Edgar 1966) and Bay of Plenty (P. F. Ballance, pers comm.) as well as throughout the South Island (Tunnickliffe 1968). During field work about Northland over the past few years I have frequently encountered Welcome Swallows. I note they are quite common in the vicinity of North Cape and I have also seen a number of nests, much less than a metre above high tide level, in caves along the western shore of Hukatere Peninsula, Kaipara Harbour.

Although it is widely accepted that a southwards spread of the Welcome Swallow from Northland has given rise to the southern populations, it has also been suggested that these could be the result of further successful colonisations in the years following 1958 (Edgar 1966).