

## Predation by the Lace Monitor on Chicks of the Tawny Frogmouth

At about 10:00 hrs on 14 November 1978, while carrying out fieldwork at Alidade Hill (Colo Wilderness) New South Wales (33°17' S., 150°33' E.), my attention was attracted by the alarm call of a Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*. From a vantage point among rocks at the top of a cliff face I was able to observe the distressed bird and the cause of its vocalization. A Lace Monitor *Varanus varius*, estimated to be 120 cm in length, had located the nest of the frogmouth and was there engaged in swallowing the first of two half-grown, fluffy white chicks. After the first, the second chick was swallowed with barely a pause. The monitor's gular pouch was greatly extended to facilitate this.

The nest, which was located on the end of the short stump of a broken branch of a Eucalyptus tree, just above the first fork, was 20-25 metres above the ground.

Following its meal the monitor descended to the first fork and lay immobile for 10-15 minutes before ascending the limb opposite that leading to the frogmouth nest. The lower part of this branch

ascended as a gentle incline; while the lizard was negotiating this section a second bird, an Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*, left its nest above and became very agitated, hopping backwards and forwards and directing its alarm call at the approaching reptile. However, the branch leading to the oriole's nest forked backwards over the lizard forming an acute angle that, despite several attempts, the monitor was unable to ascend. The lizard soon gave up and descended the tree to continue its foraging on the ground.

In addition to the interest of those observations from the point of view of feeding by the lizard and predation on the Tawny Frogmouth, they clearly demonstrate the importance of the positioning of birds' nests relative to tree morphology. Survival value of the repeated use of proven 'safe' nest sites can also be easily appreciated.

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## Registry of Current Ornithological Research

Since the publication of Douglas Dow's *Index to Current Australian Ornithological Research* there has been no updated review of current ornithological research and field work in Australia. To remedy this situation the RAOU Council has approved a plan to publish, each year or occasionally, a brief register of ornithological work carried out on a State-by-State basis. This summary will be published as a part of the RAOU Newsletter.

Information for the 1980 publication should be forwarded by June 1980. Members wishing to participate in this review should contact:

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## Australasian Raptor Association

At a recent symposium on birds of prey hosted by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union a raptor group was formed. The broad aims of the group will be to promote raptor research within Australia. Specific objects are being considered by the elected committee and members.

It is proposed that the raptor group operate as a semi-autonomous association under the patronage of the Field Investigation Committee of the RAOU. Membership will be open to all, whether members of the RAOU or not. Payment of a small annual subscription will be required to cover a newsletter and administration costs.

Members who are interested in joining the raptor group and would like further information are invited to write to:

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