

The Juvenile Plumage of the Shining Flycatcher

W. E. BOLES

The striking sexual dimorphism in the plumage of the adult Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra alecto* is well known (see photographs in Reader's Digest 1976: 389), but like many Australian birds, little is known about its juvenile plumage. Immature birds of both sexes resemble the female, but are duller (Reader's Digest 1976).

Rand and Gilliard (1967: 392) stated that the "Newly hatched young are black with scanty blackish brown down on the feather tracts of the upper parts". As there does not seem to be a description of the juvenile plumage, the following plumage is presented for a specimen in The Australian Museum collection (AM O. 12198). This specimen was collected on the Daly River, Northern Territory, c. 1902. It is unsexed and approximately nine centimetres in length. The tail is barely emerged. The juvenile plumage is similar in colour to that of the immature and adult female.

Forehead, crown: Very dark ashy-brown.

Upperparts: Bright rufous.

Chin, throat, underparts: White except for pale rufous around vent.

Primaries: Upperwing, light brown with pale rufous edging to outer web; underwing, light ashy-brown.

Secondaries: Upperwing, bright rufous; underwing light ashy-brown.

Coverts: Upperwing, bright rufous; underwing, mottled brown and white.

Alula: Ashy-brown.

Tail: Bright rufous (just emerging).

This plumage pattern is unlike that of other Australian representatives of the genus *Myiagra*. These are generally mottled or streaked, darker above and lighter below and lacking the obvious pattern of juvenile *M. alecto*.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Mr H. J. de S. Disney for commenting on this note and the specimen.

References

- Rand, A. L. and E. T. Gilliard (1967), Handbook of New Guinea Birds. Weidenfield & Nicholson, London.
Reader's Digest (1976), Complete Book of Australian Birds. Reader's Digest Services Pty. Ltd., Sydney.

Walter E. Boles, The Australian Museum,
College Street, Sydney, N.S.W. 2000.

Diet Differences in Adult and Nestling Australian Magpie

During September and October 1978 a pair of Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*, reared two young in a Paw-paw tree 2.4 metres from the ground in the garden of a house in Alstonville, New South Wales.

The pair had been fed at a bird table for 11 months and would readily come onto house verandahs for food. The male of the pair was readily identifiable by the presence of a broken upper mandible.

On three occasions when pieces of cheese were thrown to the birds, once to the male and twice to the female, they were seen to drop a bill full of insects, eat the cheese, then pick up the insects and take them to the nest to feed the young.

It is not known if this behaviour has been recorded in Australia, but it is mentioned in "Fundamentals of Ornithology", Van Tyne and Berger, page 249, as being observed in America with male Cardinals *Richmondia cardinalis*.

During the whole nesting period neither parent made the slightest aggressive gesture towards humans, presumably as a result of them being fed for a long period.

T. H. Alley, 32 Parkland Drive,
Alstonville, N.S.W. 2477.