

building on the nest of a Coot *Fulica atra* situated on a low stump at the edge of the dam about 50 metres from the house from which excellent observations could be made. The Coots were still using the nest at night to brood their four month-old chicks and strongly resisted the usurpation with flapping of wings and splashing of water, all accompanied by a great deal of vocal noise. For no apparent reason a Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* joined in the fracas. Once or twice the swampheens stopped work and made a stab at them with his beak, but in a quarter of an hour the nest was to his satisfaction, and as the Coots and Musk Duck had retired, he commenced feeding. By 19:15 hours all the family were feeding and gradually working nearer to the nest. Each adult had one chick in close company with it, which continually begged for food by jumping up and down and at the same time flapping its under-developed wings. The other two chicks were feeding independently, but sometimes they would approach one of the adults for food. However, on each occasion they were chased off. The juvenile was seen to feed the rejected pair with portions of frog.

At 19:30 hours one of the independent chicks climbed into the new nest, but left almost immediately. Five minutes later the female led the chick, which had been accompanying her, into the nest where she arranged and rearranged the nest material. The chick which had been accompanying the male ran to the nest and climbed in without hesitation. At 19:45 hours one of the independent chicks came to the nest, but before entering stopped and extended its head to the female on the nest, who reciprocated the action, touching the chick's beak. The chick then entered the nest. These actions were repeated a few minutes later when the last chick came to the nest. Finally the juvenile squeezed in as much of itself as it could. At 20:10 hours the male approached the nest, stopped about two metres from it and called loudly before moving quickly away to the far side of the territory.

On subsequent evenings the foregoing actions were repeated, except that we did not see the juvenile enter the nest again. By 13 January the four chicks were roosting in the lower branches of some trees standing in about 30 cm of water and the juvenile flew to the higher branches. On 28 January the whole family was still feeding in the territory.

None of the birds was banded and it was thus not possible to determine, as the chicks grew older, which were following the adults and which were feeding independently, as there were no observable differences between them. Next season we hope to learn more by having the birds on this dam banded.

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Reference

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Wing-tagging of Parrots

Numbers of Adelaide Rosellas, Eastern Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets and Musk Lorikeets have been marked recently with patagial wing-tags in the Mount Lofty Ranges of South Australia.

Birds were marked with a bi-coloured tag on each wing, the size of the tag varying according to the species. The tags are also numbered to facilitate individual identification if birds are re-trapped or recovered.

Details of sightings or recoveries will be appreciated and may be reported to the project leader.

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