

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

North, A. J., 1904. Description of the nest of the Guttated Bower-bird, *Chlamydodera guttata*, Gould. *Records of the Australian Museum* 5(2): 131–132, plate xvi. [28 January 1904].

doi:10.3853/j.0067-1975.5.1904.1049

ISSN 0067-1975

Published by the Australian Museum, Sydney

nature culture **discover**

Australian Museum science is freely accessible online at
<http://publications.australianmuseum.net.au>
6 College Street, Sydney NSW 2010, Australia



DESCRIPTION OF THE NEST OF THE GUTTATED BOWER-
BIRD, *CHLAMYDODERA GUTTATA*, GOULD.

By ALFRED J. NORTH, C.M.B.O.U., C.M.Z.S., Ornithologist.

(Plate xvi.)

The Trustees of the Australian Museum have received from Mr. C. Ernest Cowle, through Mr. G. A. Keartland, a nest of *Chlamydodera guttata*. Up to the present time only two nests of this species have been recorded, and both were also found in Central Australia. One discovered by Mr. Cowle on the 28th October, 1898, in a mulga growing in a valley south of Mareena Bluff, contained minute fragments of eggshell and dried up yolk, a young Bower-bird just able to fly being caught in the same tree. Another nest with two fresh eggs was found by Mr. James F. Field during the first week in February, 1899, near Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Both of these nests are referred to in "Nests and Eggs of Birds found breeding in Australia and Tasmania"¹. The present nest, which contained three young ones, was found by one of Mr. Cowle's black boys near Illamurta about the 18th January, 1903. It is a nearly flat, oval structure, built at the junction of a horizontal forked stem of a *Capparis spinosa*, the foundation being irregularly formed of long, thin twigs and thorny stems interlaced together, and the inside, which is slightly cupped, is lined with finer twigs, and some curly tendrils and dried grass stems. With the exception of a few straggling twigs, it measures externally twelve inches in length along the fork, eight inches in breadth, and four inches in depth, the inner cup averaging four inches in diameter by one inch and a quarter in depth. Relative to this nest, which is figured on Plate xvi., Mr. Cowle, writing from Illamurta, Central Australia, under date 21st January, 1903, has kindly supplied me with the following notes:—"One of the black boys told me a few days ago there was a Bower-bird's nest, with three young in it, about a mile from here, and I have just come back from having a look at it. The nest was built in a "Native Orange" (*Capparis spinosa*), the fruit of which is a favourite food of these

¹ North—Aus. Mus. Spec. Cat., i., 2, 1902, p.p. 50, 51.

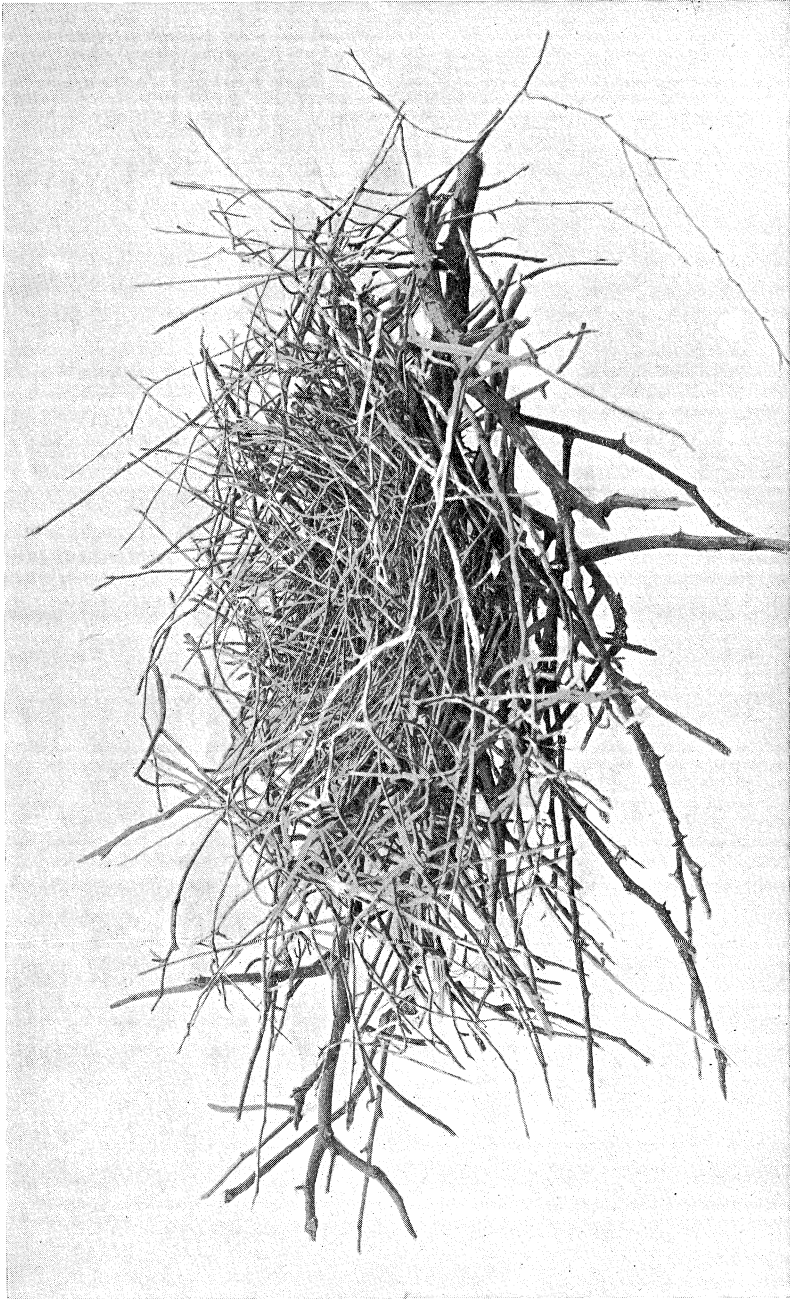
birds. We found that two of the young ones had left the nest, but managed to secure the other after some time, which was just able to flutter about. One of the parents was very daring, flying repeatedly at the boy, at the same time ruffling up its feathers like a rooster and making most peculiar noises in its throat. I got the boy to take the young one to the nest and make it cry out, and while the parent was pecking at him he grabbed it also, and I am going to see if I can rear them in a cage. The nest is very similar to the one I previously described to you, and has that 'last season' appearance about it. I will cut it carefully down when I am better, and will send it to you. What surprised me most was the viciousness and daring of the bird the boy caught. Usually they are shy and cunning when one is about, cackling and screeching until you appear, and then one cannot hear or find them although you may be quite close to them." Mr. Cowle subsequently informed me that the young bird did not live long, and that the old one died after it had been kept in captivity for about ten months.

With the above nest Mr. Keartland kindly forwarded me on loan for description the fellow egg of the set taken by Mr. Field, near Alice Springs Station, the first egg being fully described and figured in Part ii. of "Nests and Eggs of Birds found breeding in Australia and Tasmania."² It is of a greenish-grey ground colour, which is over-laid with splashes, long blurred streaks, and angular, curved, or zig-zag markings of different shades of umber-brown, most of them being broader in the middle and tapering out towards each end; one somewhat resembles a man's head, another consists of a broad black streak, which joins a similar coloured scroll. Length, 1.52 x 1 inch. So far as is known the remarkably handsome set of eggs of the Guttated Bower-bird in Mr. Keartland's collection are the only specimens yet taken.

² North—Loc. cit., p. 51, pl. ii., fig. 7.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI.

Nest of Guttated Bower Bird, *Chlamydodera guttata*, Gould.
(About one-third natural size.)



H. BARNES photo.,
Aust. Mus.

Electric Photo-Engr. Co. Ltd.,
Sydney.