

# Butcher Birds in Grave Situation

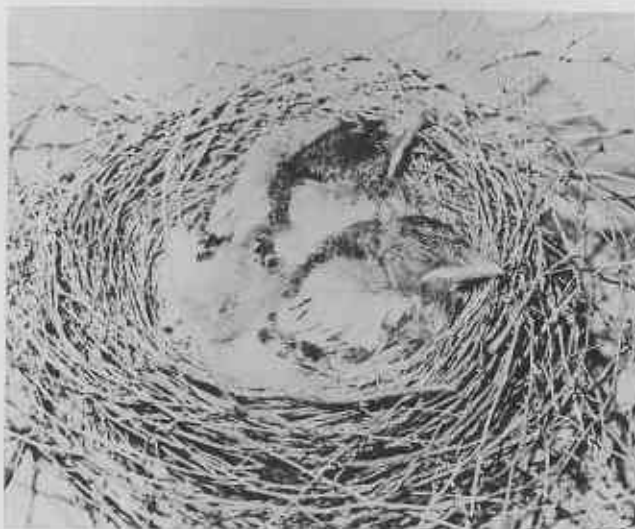
During October 1978 Wildlife Officer Bernard Haberley was called to Karrakatta Cemetery in relation to an unidentified bird harassing grave diggers and bereaved relations of deceased persons.

The bird involved was a male Grey Butcher Bird (Western variety) which was quickly identified as it passed in front of the Wildlife Officer's eyes on one of its many sorties. In the immediate area was a female Grey Butcher Bird sitting on a nest containing two young chicks approximately six weeks old.



Wildlife Officer Bernard Haberley with young Butcher birds.

At the time of this observation, concern was expressed, for in three hours, a service was to be performed and no grave had been dug due to the grave diggers concern for their safety. One such gentleman had received a graze to the side of his head which left him severely shaken. The superintendent and head groundsman had also been attacked and in the case of the latter, blood had been drawn. Wildlife Officer Haberley reported that on one occasion a grave digger was exhumed from his task on hearing an ear piercing scream. To his relief he found an elderly lady in full flight, waving a



Close up of nest containing the two fledglings.

red jumper above her head and the bird in hot pursuit. It had been suggested that in this instant, the hunter appeared more frightened than the victim.

The male Grey Butcher Bird was a beautiful specimen and to have had it "laid to rest" would have been the easiest thing to do. However, it was decided that "butchery" was not the Department's business and it was decided that to remove the nest and young would subdue the male's behaviour.

Wildlife Officer Haberley proceeded to Karrakatta Cemetery and after a lengthy encounter with the male bird went about his ghoulish task of dislodging the female and taking the nest and young. This was done with the Wildlife Officer perched precariously on top of a departmental motor vehicle and covered by a blanket.

During the confrontation the female bird remained quite angelic, even as her young were being taken. The male however showed tremendous concern and turned on a devilish display after the nest and young were removed.

The two fledgelings were taken to the Perth Zoological Gardens where they were raised with expert care and attention.

The adults, have now returned to their favourite tree to warble their divine service throughout the coming winter. It is hoped that next spring they are a little less persistent in resurrecting their position in the neighbourhood as proud parents.

## NATURE RESERVES

There were some 24 new nature reserves totalling 734 971·769 9 hectares added to the already impressive list of nature reserves, in Western Australia during 1977/78. The total 977 nature reserves vary in size from 1 to 2·49 million hectares, each created for a specific purpose, as a representative sample of a particular environment. The largest new reserve acquired was Neendojer Rock Reserve of 2 249·06 hectares. Statistics of nature Reserves now in Western Australia are as follows.

Year (30 June)	Total Number	Area (ha)	Vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority	
			No.	Area (ha)
1969	278	2 342 966	127	818 442
1970	315	2 100 318	156	867 362
1971	359	4 955 893	213	4 415 595
1972	404	5 077 224	242	4 533 944
1973	440	5 013 287	265	4 607 266
1974	454	5 033 935	281	4 626 617
1975	491	5 103 037	320	4 713 482
1976	918	5 339 947	351	4 747 403
1977	946	7 520 839	385	6 927 627
1978	1 003	8 398 648	435	8 086 314