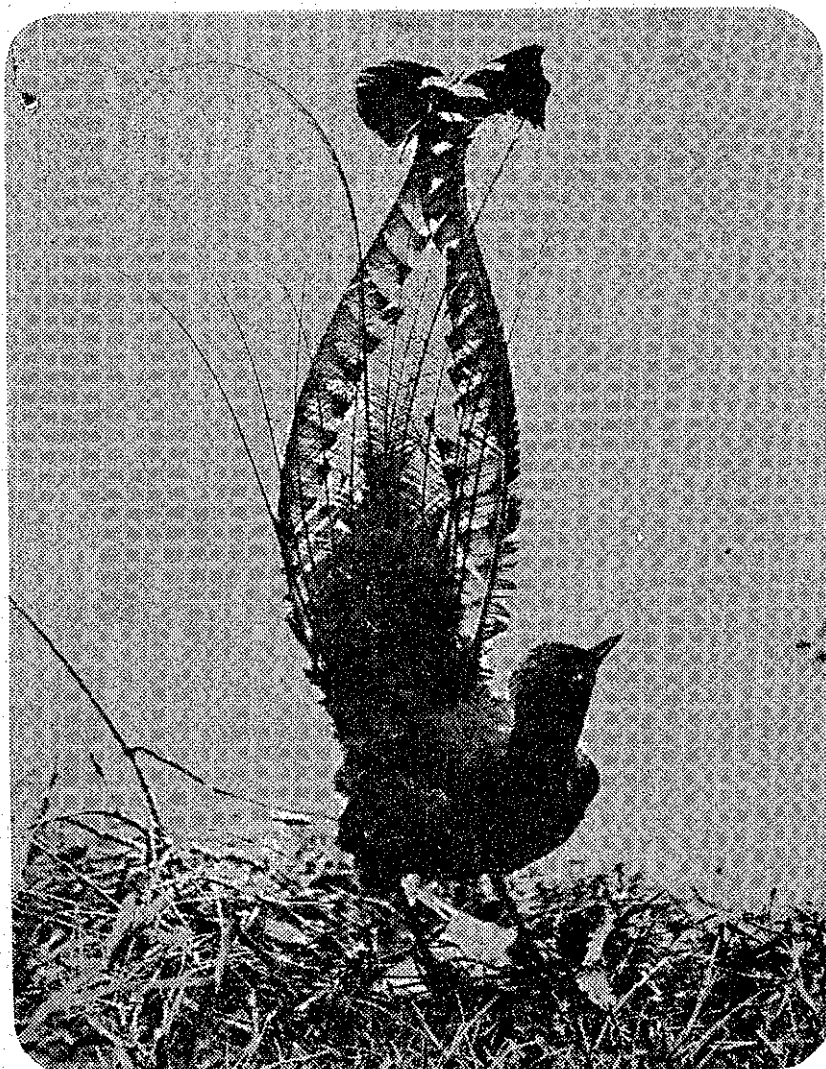


Australian Native Birds

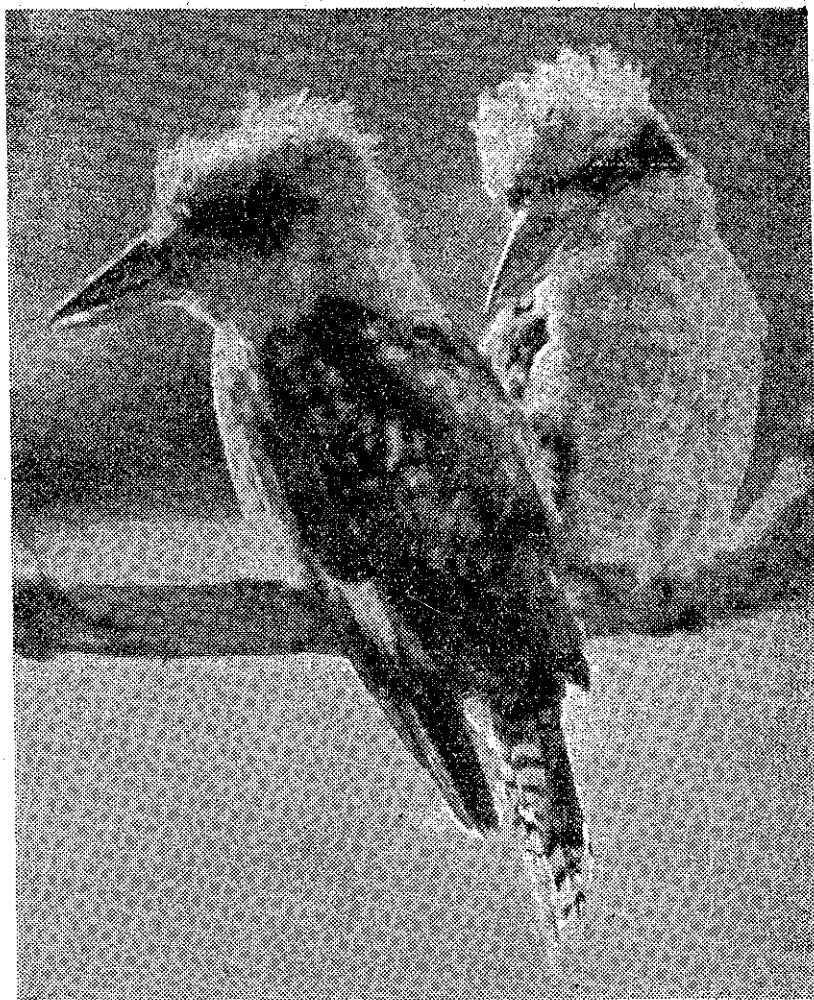
A Talk from 2ZW

by
Mr. S. W. Stilling



The lyre bird, the greatest feathered imitator in the world.

THE emu, together with the kangaroo, completes the picture of the Australian Commonwealth Coat of Arms. This bird, like the kangaroo, is regarded in some parts of the country as a pest, indeed only quite recently farmers in a wheat-belt area, in Western Australia, requisitioned for machine-guns with which to slay these birds, and in many parts of Australia, where the Kangaroo has become a nuisance, parties have been organised to round up and destroy large numbers. It will



The kookaburra laughs loudest in the duet.

thus be seen that two of Australia's national creatures have become a pest in certain parts of the Commonwealth.

Fortunately, however, this is not so all over the country, and many people still delight to see and observe both the emu and the kangaroo.

The emu is the second largest living bird, and is considered one of the most primitive. The single species that is still living is confined to the mainland of Australia, having been exterminated in Tasmania and King Island.

The emu is gracefully proportioned, standing from 50 to 60 inches in height, with soft, drooping grey-brown feathers, and possessing small appendages for wings. It is incapable of flight, but its legs, provided with three claws, are long and powerful, and enables it to travel quite as fast as a deer. The external difference between male and female is hardly apparent.

Emus travel mostly in flocks and frequent open forests or plain country. To see a flock stalking majestically across the plains is a sight to gladden the heart of anyone, except perhaps a farmer who has suffered from their visit. The emu lives mostly on grass, herbage, wild fruit, grasshoppers and insects, and anything else of a like nature coming their way.

The nest is usually a bed of grass or trampled herbage, built on the ground, no attempt being made to make it inconspicuous. The eggs are dark green in colour, granulated and large, and may number from five to ten, and even up to sixteen if the season is favourable. Incubation by the male bird is the usual arrangement, and the sitting season is about ten weeks.

The young emu chicks are prettily striped yellow, brown and white, offering remarkable resemblance to long dry grass, nature's protection against enemies. The young chicks are (Continued on page 13.)