

When we take our tame woodhen's two eggs she will not waste a day hatching on nothing, but will go to the opposite side of her domain, make another nest, and have two or three eggs in it within a fortnight. And the penguins might do the same, but I think they are mere idiots as compared with woodhens.

Last year the penguins in South Cave were eight days earlier than this year. Only about 1 per cent. of them will have comfortable nests lined with dry grass or leaves, 50 per cent. may have a few sticks as thick as my finger laid about in disorder, as if they had but a faint idea of building a nest, while all the others will only have damp and dirty hollows in the highest part of the floor, which often cannot be reached without wading through a pool of liquid mud. However, this last arrangement will only allow the hardiest of the two chickens to survive, and then it will get more food for better development, so that what I think is stupidity may be clear common-sense to a penguin. They have wet lives before them, and pampering in their young days might not be the best preparation for the race of penguins.

CARE OF THE YOUNG.

My camp at South Point was right in the pathway of the penguins when they were coming down to the sea to get food for their young ones, which were under the rocks a couple of hundred yards up in the bush. There were only three nests just there, and generally three of the penguins came down together, passed the tent and fire with great fear and trembling, and then toddled away over the stones, or jumped from one boulder to another on the rough beach till they got in the surf. They did not seem to care whether it was sunshine or storm, but went their two trips a day very regularly—or more likely one trip for each of the mates, for both males and females came down.

The male is the bigger; he has a stronger beak and thicker neck, but the same plumage and crest as the female. He is also the bravest, though they are all timid as compared with woodhens, for I suppose they feel their deficiency as runners, while the woodhen's swiftness may beget him a great part of his apparent courage.

This little community of penguins seem to live very kindly with each other without any of the woodhen's enmity. A female was wanting to come past the tent, but was timid and sat there. Then a big one came on first and waited for her, and came on again and encouraged her until she got past and then she ran for it at her best. And when a pair of them meet on the pathway they expand their pretty crests, bow to each other, and pass by so close that their flippers touch as if in kindness, which was surprising to see among the "beastly penguins." It shows that all the little kindly manners do not belong to the men; and that the idea of doffing the hat may have been taken from one of the oldest walkers on the land.

Among all the thousands I have seen I never saw their crests expanded till I came to this camp, and had no idea of how pretty they were. There are two crests, one on each side of the head, and when expanded they form two crescents of delicately curved yellow feathers standing a little apart, not unlike a golden crown.

When coming home, and just out of the water, they sit on a stone and have a good long rest, and then toddle or jump up the beach a little way and have another spell. Sometimes they are inclined to stay rather long fixing their feathers, as if they forgot about home, until they hear the awful howling up at the nest, when they start away again.

They have two distinct voices or tunes. One of them is a song that the pair sing in company when they are at home and happy, but it is a harsh old song; the other is an urgent call on the fisher to hurry home with the food. I was only there for a few days, but I soon learned that much of their language, and it explained a great deal of the noise they usually make at their nests.

Some of them go a quarter of a mile up in the bush to find water and a suitable place for their nests—sometimes up a steep gully that a man could hardly climb, a couple of hundred feet high. But I notice that those that go far away rear very few young ones: it is too severe a task. Travelling on land is evidently hard work for them, and they probably fail in carrying home the food to feed the young ones.

One of the requirements for a nest appears to be a convenient dark place where the young ones can get out of the light to avoid the sandflies, and even then I have not looked closely at one young one without seeing the effect of the flies about the head. They always stay out a good while when they are getting fed, and then the flies gather about them.

I used to wonder why I did not see more of them in the water when there were so many ashore, but, like other mysteries, it is very simple when you know it.

I often saw the three penguins going into the water at South Point, and even when it was quite calm I seldom saw them again till they came ashore. It seemed that they had some distance to go for food, and went right away at great speed under water, for they never think of travelling on the surface, but came up for breath so quickly that you would not know them from fish jumping. It is only the idlers that are seen on the surface. All the busy ones are underneath nine-tenths of their time, and invisible for the other tenth. They do not hunt about for riffraff fish in shallow water like the shags, but go away for something dainty.

I did not like to kill one of those that were feeding their young ones, but I wanted to know what food they were getting, so I tried to frighten some out of them, which you can easily do with a young shag, but not so easily with a penguin. The first one I caught positively refused to disgorge a scrap, but roared and fought till I had to let him go; but the next one was more timid, and gave up all I wanted. It was a queer mixture—some small fish like white-bait, red whale-food, some half-digested cuttlefish, and other jelly substance that I did not know, also a few anchovies, which are here again this year, but not in quantity.