

twenty-seven.¹ In one day's hunting on horseback sixty-four eggs were found; forty-four of these were in two nests, and the remaining twenty scattered huachos. The Gauchos unanimously affirm, and there is no reason to doubt their statement, that the male bird alone hatches the eggs, and for some time afterward accompanies the young. The cock when on the nest lies very close; I have myself almost ridden over one. It is asserted that at such times they are occasionally fierce, and even dangerous, and that they have been known to attack a man on horseback, trying to kick and leap on him. My informer pointed out to me an old man whom he had seen much terrified by one chasing him. I observe in Burchell's travels in South Africa, that he remarks, "Having killed a male ostrich, and the feathers being dirty, it was said by the Hottentots to be a nest bird." I understand that the male emu in the Zoölogical Gardens takes charge of the nest: this habit, therefore, is common to the family.

The Gauchos unanimously affirm that several females lay in one nest. I have been positively told that four or five hen birds have been watched to go in the middle of the day, one after the other, to the same nest. I may add, also, that it is believed in Africa that two or more females lay in one nest.² Although this habit at first appears very strange, I think the cause may be explained in a simple manner. The number of eggs in the nest varies from twenty to forty, and even to fifty; and, according to Azara, sometimes to seventy or eighty. Now although it is most probable, from the number of eggs found in one district being so extraordinarily great in proportion to the parent birds, and likewise from the state of the ovarium of the hen, that she may in the course of the season lay a large number, yet the time required must be very long. Azara states² that a female in a state of domestication laid seventeen eggs, each at the interval of three days one from

¹ Burchell's Travels, vol. i. p. 280.

² Azara, vol. iv. p. 173.