

### From Magazines, &c.

FEATHER-PLUCKING.—In the February number of the *Avicultural Magazine* Mr. A. G. Butler points out that this "disease" is due to "two causes—incorrect feeding or insect pests." He proceeds, after many comments:—"I think it possible that . . . if . . . a little magnesia is stirred into its drinking water occasionally, and its diet is strictly attended to, the irritation may pass off," &c. In some species the habit is cured by giving the bird—presumably a Parrot—wood or bark to gnaw at.

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*The Auk*.—The April number of this magazine (vol. xxi., part 2) contains some valuable papers on the bird-life of North America, with some good photo. plates. An article from the pen of Mr. William Morton Wheeler deals with what he describes as the "myth-nimbus" which has grown around so many birds and animals, particularly in what are called "nature books." Some interesting correspondence between the great Audubon and Spencer F. Baird is included in the number.

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"ON the Breeding of Some of the Waterfowl at Goochest, in the Year 1903," is the title of a paper by F. E. Blaauw, C.M.Z.S., in *The Ibis* (January, 1904). Included is an interesting note on Cape Barren Geese (*Cereopsis novæ-hollandiæ*), concerning which some of our members have information of their own. A full clutch of five goslings was reared to maturity, notwithstanding the occasional frost and snow of their adopted northern home.

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THE PECTORAL OR WHITE-BREASTED FINCH.—A fairly good black and white figure of this Finch is given by Mr. D. Seth-Smith in the February issue of the *Avicultural Magazine*. In the accompanying reading matter the author furnishes a full description of the species, also of its habits and habitat. "*Munia pectoralis*," the author of the article says, "appears to be confined to the north-west of Australia;" and (in England) "the birds appear to be hardy and easily kept in health on a diet of canary and millet seed, though grass in flower is appreciated, and should be supplied when obtainable." Have none of our Australian members any experiences in this matter?

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BIRD DISTRIBUTION.—An extract in *The Ibis* from "The Journal of Edward Wilson, M.B., Surgeon and Zoologist to the National Antarctic Expedition," mentions such familiar species as Gannets, Terns, and Petrels, and describes the habits of some, as well as giving some idea of their habitat. As the problem as to whether Antarctic birds and those of Australasia are as closely linked as seems probable is one still remaining for solution, the article should be of interest to our readers. To solve the prob-

lem of the lines of distribution of species, with its intricate geological and aerial underlines, would need more than a Wallace amongst us. Is he to be found?

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BIRDS' EGGS IN THE DRESDEN MUSEUM.—The study of oology as a branch of natural science is proceeding apace. The birds' eggs from the Australian region alone in the Dresden Museum, according to a list compiled under the direction of Dr. A. B. Meyer, reach the respectable number of about 550 species, including many, especially from New Guinea, possibly not described, and certainly not yet figured. Among those little known, or undescribed, of purely Australian species, may be mentioned *Sericornis lævigata*, *Sittella leucoptera*, *Cyclopsittacus maccoyi*, &c.; but it would be extremely interesting to learn the history of the egg or eggs of the extinct Kangaroo Island Emu (*Dromæus ater*), said to be in the collection.

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*The Ibis*, vol. viii., No. 14, contains a coloured plate by Mr. Goodchild of *Mirafra degeni*, which may possibly only interest Australian readers from the fact that its specific name is based on that of a gentleman who not only did good work in Australia, but is pursuing his investigations to good purpose in Africa. There are two more coloured plates in this number—one by the same artist, the other some admirably figured eggs of Palæarctic birds. Reviewing a work on the latter subject the editors favour the binomial system of nomenclature, and “prefer adding *typicus* to the name of the type species, when it is required,” to such an alliterative system as “*Pica pica pica*,” &c. They are staunch advocates of what seems the more sensible course.

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*Bulletin of the Philippine Museum*, No. 3 (30/1/04) contains an important paper by Mr. Richard C. M'Gregor on “Birds from Benguet Province, Luzon, and from the Islands of Lubang, Mindoro, Cuyo, and Cagayancillo.” This is the second of a series of reports on zoological collections made for the Philippine Museum, and contains a record of all identified species of birds collected or observed on recent expeditions directed by Commissioner Dean C. Worcester, Secretary of the Interior, to the Islands of Lubang, Verde, Cagayancillo, and Agutaya, and to the Province of Benguet, Luzon; also species recently secured in Cuyo and Mindoro, which are believed to be new to those islands.

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WING-BEATS OF BIRDS.—Dr. Jonathan Dwight, jun., writing on wing-movements in *The Auk* (April, 1904, vol. xxi., p. 286) says:—“On several occasions I have had opportunity for watching Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) following in the wake of a steamboat running at the rate of 10 or 12 miles per hour,

and on calm days I find the wing-beats in this species average about 180 to the minute. . . . Laboratory experiments abroad, with harnessed birds, show that the wing-beats of a Sparrow are 780 a minute, of a Duck 540, of a Pigeon 480, and so on." Dr. Dwight points out that this is an almost untouched field of study, and everyone will agree that bird-flight, both in this and other phases, presents some most interesting problems.

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BIRD PROTECTION ABROAD.—Contrasting the measures adopted for bird protection in New Zealand with those provided in the U.S.A., Mr. T. S. Palmer (*Bird-Lore*, Jan.—Feb., 1904, p. 36) says of the latter:—"In marked contrast with our practice, she has found it advantageous, in spite of her varied climatic conditions, to have a uniform open season of moderate length for all game, instead of seasons of varying length extending over eight or nine months for different birds. Spring shooting is thus done away with, and more effectual protection given to migratory shore-birds and water-fowl than is possible under our present laws." But what as to other birds? Will not most observers think that a modification of the zone system is better for Australasia?

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ST. KILDA AND ITS BIRDS.—In a lecture delivered before the Liverpool Biological Society by Dr. J. Wigglesworth, F.R.C.P., M.B.O.U., and which has been published in book form, with some good photo. illustrations, the author describes the little island off the coast of Inverness-shire. Not only are the inhabitants of historic Hirta depicted, and their mode of life described, but a list of its birds, notes on their habits, &c., are given. Beyond the fact that at one time a large proportion of the islanders migrated to Australia, the book will possess interest for local readers from the fact that it deals with, amongst the 25 species listed, such birds as Gannets, Fulmars, Cormorants, Gulls, &c. The publication was kindly lent for review by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S.

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HONEY-EATERS IN CAPTIVITY.—In a recent number of the *Avicultural Magazine* is given an article (illustrated with some very good photo-prints) dealing with the interesting experiment which Dr. and Mrs. G. Horne, and their niece (Miss Bowie) have been carrying out for some time with many species of these birds. Their success has been great. Many forms have become so familiarized to their new surroundings (an aviary in which living shrubs are grown) that they look on human visitors as friends, and boldly endeavour to extract their favourite food from flowers which the visitors wear. There are many points in bird life which can only be studied when birds are under such close observation as is possible in a case of this kind,

and it would be well if more bird-lovers accepted the advice—"Go thou and do likewise." The author of the paper is Mr. A. J. Campbell.

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*Bird-Lore.*—The frontispiece in the March–April issue of this magazine (vol. vi., No. 2) is a coloured plate of two species of Warbler (Wilson's and the Canadian), executed by Mr. L. A. Fuertes. A subsequent coloured plate depicts two other species of this family (the Black-throated Green and the Golden-cheeked). Many interesting bird photos. (and notes) are given. In the editorial article it is said:—"A bird's economic value . . . . is not to be ascertained by 'common observation.' . . . . Nor can the best-equipped observer hope to reach satisfactory conclusions merely from observing the bird out of doors. This is an important side of his work, but must be supplemented by detailed stomach analyses wherein he avails himself of the services of specialists in other departments of science—entomology, botany, mammalogy, &c." The Audubon Society's chairman hardly seems optimistic on this occasion over the state of matters *re* bird protection.

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*The Geelong Naturalist.*—After many vicissitudes for thirteen years, the organ of the Geelong Field Naturalists' Club has been revived in the shape of a quarterly journal, with which has been incorporated *The Wombat*, under the hon. editorship of Mr. John J. Cary.—No. 1 (March, 1904) of the second series is to hand, and the local club is to be congratulated on endeavouring to maintain a journal of its own. In these days, when so-called "law of priority" is so much worshipped by naturalists, it is just as well to have one's "proceedings" in type, although it would be difficult to prove that priority does not really count from the time when a paper is read and accepted before a properly constituted meeting of a club or association, notwithstanding the paper and facts are only recorded in the official "minute book." The present issue of *The Geelong Naturalist* contains "District Bird Notes"—brief field observations of half a dozen common species—by "G. F. B.," and a note on the White-browed Wood-Swallow by Mr. W. Shaw.

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*The Avicultural Magazine.*—In the number for April, 1904 (vol. ii., No. 6, p. 179) Mr. Reginald Phillipps deals with the White-throated Ground-Thrush (of which an admirable coloured plate by Mr. Grönvold is given), and chronicles its habits in a way that should be most valuable to ornithologists. "Turtle Dove Hybrids and their Fertility" (Mr. T. H. Newman, F.Z.S.) raises some problems which have a bearing both on these birds and some of our own; and in "Notes on Parrakeets" Mr. John Sergeant records amongst other interesting items that many of these birds do not seem to be affected by any severity of

weather. "Red Rosellas, Mealy Rosellas, Crimson Wings and Barnard's I have found equally hardy; all took their bath summer and winter alike with no sign of either distress or discomfort." Blue Mountain Lories have proved quite hardy with Mr. Sergeant, who gives them "the ordinary seed diet with two or three times a week a tablespoonful of honey and some sponge cake." This number also contains the announcement of the resignation by Mr. Phillipps of his position as business secretary of the Avicultural Society. Mr. T. H. Newman succeeds him.

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*The Zoologist*, No. 754 (April, 1904) contains an article which under the heading "Biological Suggestions" opens up some fields of thought which are worth further study—even amongst ourselves. The article is but the first of a series, and has for sub-heading "Rivers as Factors in Animal Distribution." Already some of our own observers (such as Mr. Lane, of Alexandra) have noted the effect of riparian influence on some phases of bird life, and the writer only emphasizes how much there is to be learned, not only as to course of migration, but also as to differentiation of species, when he says:—"As far as his knowledge extends, in a *general* way rivers do not qualify the distribution of genera and species, but in a much more *limited* sense they *do*." Another noteworthy paper is that in which Mr. G. H. Paddock controverts the theory of Professor Coues ("Field and General Ornithology"), who holds that "the egg traverses the passage small end foremost, like a round wedge, with obvious reference to ease of parturition." Mr. Paddock's experiments prove that the egg was delivered "invariably 'blunt' end first." He argues that this is only natural; "mammalian births, when normal, are head ones, and the large end of the egg contains the head of the chick." Mutton-Bird-egggers on the islands of Bass Strait who occasionally deliver a female Mutton-Bird (Petrel) of her egg will uphold Mr. Paddock's contention.

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*The Ibis* (January, 1904) contains the "Ornithological Journal of a Voyage round the World in the *Valhalla* (November, 1902, to August, 1903)." By invitation from the Earl of Crawford, F.R.S., Mr. M. J. Nicoll, M.B.O.U., the author, accompanied him as naturalist, during a cruise through the Straits of Magellan to the South Pacific, thence through Torres Strait and the Austro-Malayan Archipelago, returning to England by the Red Sea route. Besides oceanic birds noticed in the southern seas, the most interesting parts of the journal to Australians are probably the accounts of how the yacht touched at Pitcairn Island (a coloured figure of a remarkable little bird—*Tatare vaughani*—known to the islanders as a "Sparrow" is given), Tahiti, Upolu, and Fiji. Australia was touched in Torres Strait at Thursday Island and Prince of

Wales Island. On both of these 12 well-known Australian species were secured, including the Dusky Honey-eater (*Myzomela obscura*), a nest of which, containing one egg, was found suspended in the leaves of a "willow" tree on the latter island, and on a coral reef off Thursday Island a Curlew-Sandpiper (*Tringa subarquata*) was shot on the 18th May in full winter plumage, the only specimen seen. Two hundred and twenty-five specimens of birds were collected during the voyage. These have been presented by Earl Crawford to the British Museum.

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AUDUBON SOCIETIES IN RELATION TO THE FARMER.—Under this title is reprinted from the U.S.A. *Year-Book of the Department of Agriculture for 1902*, a pamphlet (just to hand) which records the immense work done by these societies in the field of bird protection, and some able arguments in the good cause. Mr. Henry Oldys, the author, points out that "with proper restraint and the adoption of systematic measures to maintain the supply, such as are in vogue in some sections of the country, the United States might easily have a stock of game birds so abundant as to furnish a cheap and readily attainable food supply worth many million dollars annually." He also directs attention to a fact which every ornithologist—everywhere—knows, "that various investigations . . . show the importance of the service rendered by birds in keeping down the floods of insects and weeds that assail crops." Fashion decrees *re aigrettes*, &c., came in for some severe handling in the comments, in which it is mentioned that a single shipment from Archangel (Russia) consists of 10 tons of Ptarmigan wings, and that a Government record shows a slaughter of nearly 2,000,000 Grouse in four years in that province. Egg-collecting is rather hardly handled, apparently with good cause. The pamphlet contains a "Bird Chart issued by the Massachusetts Society" figuring 26 useful birds, and a coloured plate of the Wood-Thrush, as a specimen page of that society's illustrations adapted for "school work." There is a great deal in the pamphlet (space precludes quotation) which would furnish valuable reading to residents in Australasia, and which would teach us all some admirable lessons. Valuable hints are given as to the direction our action should take.

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BIRD PROTECTION IN NORTH AMERICA.—Mr. William Dutcher, chairman of the A.O.U. committee appointed to supervise this matter, reports that the Audubon Societies and subscribers to the Thayer Fund have every reason to congratulate themselves on the steady progress being made. The A.O.U. model law has been adopted in nine States during 1903, and a glance at the accompanying maps (*The Auk*, vol. xxi., p. 99 *et seq.*) shows that quite half the States have now fallen into line. In five States it is admitted the committee were unsuccessful in their efforts to bring the Game Laws up to date. "Day by day and year by year" (Mr. Dutcher says) "there is a steady growth of

sentiment in favour of bird protection." One of the most important advances during the year has been an agreement arrived at between the members of the Millinery Merchants' Protective Association and the bird Unions, by which the former undertakes to discourage the use of the plumage of many specified birds, either native or imported. The Audubon Societies and the A.O.U. undertake to prevent illegal interference with the millinery trade and to refrain from aiding the passage of laws which would hinder the use or sale of feathers from domesticated fowls or those mentioned in a list given. Steps have been taken to protect the fast-diminishing game birds of even such outlying possessions as the Philippine and Midway Islands. As is the case between our own States—Victoria and New South Wales, for instance—anomalies in the Game (sometimes non-game) Laws cause trouble, and the matter of a border-line presents a serious difficulty. Efforts are being made to remedy this, as they should be here. From many of the States the sentiment against the useless destruction of bird life is reported as growing, and the whole movement in favour of bird protection seems alive. In some cases States have gone so far as to "limit the bag which anyone may make in a day." Mr. Dutcher's report is accompanied by some very good half-tone illustrations.

### Review.

#### "CATALOGUE OF BIRDS' EGGS."

THE catalogue of the collection of birds' eggs in the British Museum has reached its third volume. Owing to the unfortunate ill-health of Mr. Oates, the Museum authorities have found it necessary to invite the co-operation of the well-known ornithologist, Captain Savile Reid, to complete the "Catalogue." Captain Reid revised the manuscript of Mr. Oates and the proof sheets.

The third volume is continuing from the *Psittaciformes* to the end of the family *Pycnonotidæ* of the order *Passeriformes*, corresponding with the orders in vols. ii. and iii. in the "Hand-List of the Genera and Species of Birds" by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe. Nine hundred and seven species of eggs are carefully catalogued and described, of which number over 100 are Australian, 11 of them being figured in the beautifully coloured plates (I. to X.) The following five species are figured for the first time, namely:—*Petræca phœnicea* (Flame-breasted Robin), *P. rhodinogaster* (Pink-breasted Robin), *P. vittata* (Dusky Robin), *Pœcilodryas capito* (Large-headed Robin), and *Graucalus parvirostris* (Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike). One new description of especial interest pertains to the Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*), called the Siberian Spine-tailed Swift, two eggs having come through the "Crowley Bequest," collected at Segai, N. Mongolia, by A. Rückheil. The dimensions furnished are 1.22 x .75 and 1.2 x .75 inches, the colour, of course, being

plain white. Had many of the "Gould Collection" of eggs been described by that author when they fell into his hands, their description would have anticipated many later day authorities. Of these, such rare eggs may be mentioned as *Neophema splendida* (Scarlet-chested Grass-Parrakeet), *Pseudogerygone culicivora* (Southern Fly-eater), *Graucalus lineatus* (Barred Cuckoo-Shrike), &c., &c.

It is most interesting to notice regarding the Australian eggs how many well-known collecting grounds are given—Dawson River (Q.), Dobroyde (N.S.W.), Dandenong Ranges, Oakleigh, Somerville, even that old-time collecting haunt Albert Park (Vic.), Reed-Beds (S.A.), and so on. Exception, however, may be taken to Tasmania for *Calopsittacus novæ-hollandiæ* (Cockatoo-Parrakeet), and Melbourne for *Halcyon macleayi* (Forest Kingfisher). The respective species are not found within the States to which they are accredited. But it is just possible that authenticated eggs may, by exchange, have passed through collections in these places.

### Ornithological Association of South Australia.

THE bi-monthly meeting of the association was held at the residence of Dr. A. M. Morgan on Friday evening, 13th May. Capt. S. A. White presided.

Mr. Symonds Clark gave an account of the manner in which the Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) conveys its young from the nesting-place to the water—a distance often too great for the little ones to traverse on foot—the information being vouched for by a relative of Mr. Clark (Mr. Thomas Goodwin, of Yelda Mission Station, on the Lower Murray). The parent bird was observed to fly in from the scrub and alight near the water's edge, whereupon several ducklings appeared upon the scene from the duck's back. These were secreted closely by the mother, who departed, and in about 20 minutes returned with the remainder of her brood—eight or nine in all—who were soon enjoying their natural element.

The hon. sec. (Mr. J. W. Mellor), who had been appointed by the Aust. O.U. at the annual meeting in Hobart as the South Australian representative of the special committee to revise and bring up to date the "Check-List" of Australian birds, brought the subject before the meeting, with the object of coming to a decision as to uniformity. After a lengthy discussion as to both classification and vernacular names, it was decided to pass the matter on to a sub-committee, who will report to a future meeting of the association.

Amongst specimens shown were some by Dr. A. M. Morgan, who had a series of sternum bones, and explained the peculiarities of the various species of our birds, as well as the *modus operandi* of determining the species to which they belonged. His exhibit comprised:—Eggs of the Crescent-marked Oriole (*Mimeta flavocincta*), the Honey-eater *Ptilotis fusca*, and the White-throated Nightjar (*Eurostopus albigularis*). Mr. J. W. Mellor exhibited specimens of the Rock Pebbler (*Polytelis melanura*) and the Least Swamp Quail (*Excalfactoria lineata-australis*). Capt. S. A. White showed a series of species of the African Weaver Finches and their nests, collected by himself while in Africa. He pointed out the peculiarity of these birds in placing their nests in most inaccessible places and the well-defined limits of the various species.