

From Magazines, &c.

The Journal of Agriculture (Victoria).—To interest and instruct people about the birds, especially the useful ones, of their own country is a better aid to the protection of these birds than many Acts of Parliament. Therefore the Victorian *Journal of Agriculture* is to be commended for commencing a series of short articles on the "Insectivorous Birds of Victoria." It is a matter for congratulation that Mr. D. M'Alpine, F.C.S., a member of the Aust. O.U., and an enthusiastic worker in many departments of science, has been appointed editor. The bird articles are by Mr. Charles French, F.L.S., &c., Government Entomologist, and the coloured illustrations are from drawings by Mr. C. C. Brittlebank. The February issue (vol. i., part 2) deals with the Kestrel (*Cerchneis cenchroides*) and the Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). Regarding the former Mr. French states:—"I have adhered to the generic name known to most of us as *Tinnunculus*, believing as I do that finality in nomenclature is not a thing of the near future." If Mr. French believes that the retention of old and obsolete names is an advantage, it may also be advantageous to show in brackets the later (really the older by the law of priority) and more accepted names. The April number (part 4) deals with that little, gay favourite, the Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*). The lithographer has very obviously not done justice to the colour of the original drawing of the male bird. Moreover, had its tail been drawn more obliquely the figure would have appeared more natural, besides saving a repetition of the pose of the upper (female) figure.

The inclusion in the advertisements in the *Journal of Agriculture* of the schedule of the "Close Season for Game" is a wise forethought. No use now for country "pot-hunters" to say "'Tis folly to be wise," &c. It will be rank folly to be ignorant and shoot protected birds during close season.

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IN *The Wombat*, the journal of the Geelong Field Naturalists' Club, &c. (March, 1902), Mr. H. E. Hill contributes an article entitled "Notes on the Birds of the Bendigo District." He enumerates about 100 birds which came under his own personal observation, giving field data, more or less brief, and of much interest, because original. The following are samples:—

Pomatorhinus superciliosus.—4/11/99. Nest with six eggs in needle bush (hakea), of which three were fresh and three dried up. Do the Chatterers line those nests only which are to contain eggs?

Gymnorhina leuconota.—20/10/94. Watched a fight between two cock birds, a hen looking on from a safe distance without apparent concern as to the result.

Oreoica cristata.—10/9/98. Nest at Bullock Creek with two fresh eggs. Two or three caterpillars in nest unable to move.

Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris.—The Spinebill makes its first appearance in town about March, and I think it clears out again before nesting.

Melithreptus lunulatus.—31/8/95. Strathfieldsaye. Came across a great flock of Lunulated (White-naped) Honey-eaters, which must have been several hundreds strong.

Ptilotis auricomis.—Remarkably abundant both in town and bush.

16/10/97. Nest with two unfledged young in hakea. Bird does not leave till I am looking right into nest, when it jumps hurriedly out and tries to draw me off by the old dodge of feigning to be hurt.

Halcyon sanctus.—In a bank of a gully I found a tunnel, which I thought belonged to a Pardalote, and while I was digging it out a Sacred Kingfisher suddenly appeared, in a state of great agitation. On digging further I caught sight of the eggs, with the other bird crouched behind them, apparently in great fear. As she (it was probably the female) would not leave the nest, I had to put my hand in and lift her out, when she came without a struggle, and lay quite still in my hand for a moment before endeavouring to escape. The nest contained five fresh eggs on the bare earth.

Glossopsittacus concinnus, &c.—Very common in some years when the gums are blossoming. They usually arrive about Easter.

Chenopsis atrata.—22/4/99. A wild Black Swan has joined the tame one on Lake Neangar, Eaglehawk.

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THE *Victorian Naturalist* is to the fore again in bird matters. In the March number (vol. xvii., p. 11), Mr. G. A. Keartland contributes a paper, "Amongst the Birds in Riverina," in which he records the field observations made by himself and Messrs. C. C. and T. A. Brittlebank in Eastern Riverina during the previous September. One of the special objects of this pleasant excursion appears to have been to obtain information of the nidification of the handsome Green-Leek or the Barraband Parrakeet. The party has certainly been successful in this respect, for it either found or obtained complete data of 14 nests, each containing six eggs. Possibly such regular and large clutches may be attributed to an exceedingly favourable season. In "The Breeding of the Barraband Parrakeet" at the Micklefield Vicarage, England, mentioned in *The Avicultural Magazine* (vol. vi., p. 217, 1900) the number of eggs to the clutch is not stated, but "three young were hatched."

One of the surprises of the trip was the finding of the Osprey (*Pandion*) so far from its natural haunts—the sea coast. Had it been the Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus*), which in immature plumage much resembles the Osprey, ornithologists would not have been astonished, because the Sea-Eagle is known to frequent and has been shot in Riverina.

The same issue of the *Naturalist* contains an article by Mr. Robert Hall, which is concluded in the following (April) number, entitled, "Among the Birds of Western Australia."

Mr. Hall relates observations in a popular manner on the "feathered friends" that came under his notice during an ornithological trip undertaken at the end of 1899 in the great western territory, including a brief stay on the historical shoals, Houtman's Abrolhos. When he penned his interesting observations, descriptions of the birds and their habits, he was evidently in his best vein. Mr. Hall, writing apparently only from second-hand information, mentions a small island at the entrance of Denmark River, about 40 miles from King George's Sound, where the Wedge-tailed Petrels (*Puffinus chlororhynchus*) had prepared their burrows for laying in November. Possibly the species of Petrel is the Fleshy-footed (*P. carneipes*), which is known to breed on Breaksea Island, at the entrance of the Sound. The Wedge-tailed Petrel has hitherto never been found breeding further south on the western coast than Rottne Island, off Fremantle.

Although the field naturalist always walks abroad on the tip-toe of expectation, the unexpected frequently turns up. Who would have thought of finding on the coral shoals of the Abrolhos a Green-backed White-eye nesting in the pigface weed? A solitary Red-capped Robin was also noticed out there. No wonder it "looked disconsolate."

The more critical and technical notes of Mr. Hall's work on this Western trip are appearing in *The Ibis*, and will be duly noticed when concluded.

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Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales.—Part 4 of vol. xiii. (April, 1902) contains a coloured plate of *Chalcococcyx plagosus* (Lath.), the Bronze Cuckoo, as an accompaniment to Mr. A. J. North's fifth paper on "The Insectivorous Birds of New South Wales." Notes on this bird are given, as also on the Black-eared and "Rufous-tailed" Cuckoos. The Channel-bill and Koel are also alluded to. These papers are published as contributions from the Australian Museum, and this is possibly the reason why, as a sort of appendix, Mr. North gives a lengthy description (illustrated) of the egg of the Fawn-breasted Bower-bird (*Chlamydodera cerviniventris*), which had been previously described by him in 1886. He also describes something far newer—two eggs of the Varied Lorikeet (*Ptilosclera versicolor*), received by Mr. G. A. Keartland from the junction of the Fitzroy and Margaret Rivers (collected 6/5/01). "The nesting-place was in the spout of a gum-tree, about 30 feet from the ground, and the eggs, which were quite fresh, were deposited on the dry, decayed wood, about 18 inches from the entrance. The eggs are swollen ellipse in form, pure white, the shell being close-grained, dull, and lustreless. Length:—(a) .91 x .76 inch; (b) .93 x .73 inch." Up till quite recently these eggs were classed as "undescribed."

SEVERAL booklets have been received from Mr. Harry C. Oberholser, Assistant Biologist in the Agricultural Department, Washington, U.S.A.

To Australasian ornithologists one is of particular interest. It is a paper on "Some Untenable Names in Ornithology," forming part of the "Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia," March, 1899. They relate principally to generic terms, of which four are Australian, as follows:—

Amytis, Lesson, is untenable by reason of *Amytis*, Savigny, proposed for a genus of Vermes. *Diaphorillas* is substituted.

Xerophila, Gould, must be displaced on account of *Xerophila*, Held, a genus of Molluscs. *Aphelocephala* is substituted.

Stictoptera, Reichenbach, is untenable by reason of *Stictoptera*, Guenée, for a group of Lepidoptera. It is replaced by *Stizoptera*.

Calornis, Gray, is debarred by *Calornis*, Billberg, for a genus of Lepidoptera. *Lamprocorax*, Bonaparte, is substituted.

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The Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club (No. 86) records the eighty-fifth meeting of this club (the inner circle, so to speak, of the B.O.U.), which took place at the Restaurant Frascati, 32 Oxford-street, London, on the 19th February, 1902. The chairman, Dr. P. L. Sclater, F.R.S., exhibited nine skins of new or rare Australian birds, and offered the following critical remarks:—

Ptilotis keartlandi, North.—This handsome species was first described by Mr. North (*Ibis*, 1895, p. 340) from specimens collected during the "Horn" Expedition to Central Australia. Examples have also been recently obtained in the vicinity of North-West Cape (see Campbell's "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," p. 402). The pair which I now exhibit was procured at Derby, North-West Australia, and sent to me by Mr. Hall.

Ptilotis leilavalensis, North.—The history of this recent addition to the Australian avifauna will be found in Mr. Campbell's new book on the "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," p. 405. The present specimen was obtained at Cardabia Creek, N.W. Australia, on 25th March, 1899, by Mr. Tom Carter, and has been sent to me by Mr. Hall.

Mirafra woodwardi, Milligan (*Vict. Nat.*, xviii., p. 25).—Mr. Hall sends me a single specimen of this *Mirafra* obtained at Derby, Western Australia, on the 24th August, 1900. The describer appears to be correct in recognizing this as a new species of Australian Lark, differing from *M. horsfieldi* in the larger size and more rufous plumage. There is an example of it in the British Museum, from Port Essington, North Australia, received from the Gould Collection, and registered as *M. horsfieldi* (Cat. B., xiii., p. 604, specimen 1). The South Australian *M. secunda*, Sharpe (Cat. B., xiii., p. 603), is also a close ally of this species, but is smaller in size and less distinctly striped on the neck.

Pseudogerygone tenebrosa, Hall (*Vict. Nat.*, xviii., p. 79).—This appears to be a valid species. I can find nothing like it in the National Collection. The specimen is from Derby, North-West Australia.

Eremiornis carteri, North (*Vict. Nat.*, xvii., pp. 78, 93, 1900).—Mr. North kindly sends me an example of this supposed new genus and species of Australian birds. The genus is closely allied to *Schanicola* of India (Cat. B., vii., p. 110), and perhaps hardly distinct; but the specimen is not

in very good condition, and I am unable to decide definitely upon it. It is at any rate a new species, and a most interesting addition to the Australian avifauna.

Platycercus macgillivrayi, North.—Mr. North has also kindly sent me a specimen of this decidedly new Parrakeet from the Burke District of Northern Queensland, which he has lately described in the *Victorian Naturalist* (xvii., pp. 91, 113). The sex is not recorded, but from Mr. North's description I suppose it to be a female. It was obtained at Cloncurry, near Normanton. The species belongs to the group of *P. barnardi*, which, however, I am not inclined to separate generically from *Platycercus*.

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THE interest pertaining to the formation of an Australasian Ornithologists' Union has been far-reaching. Of his own volition, that distinguished *savant* Dr. Paul Leverkühn, Director of the Scientific Institute and Library of His Royal Highness the Prince of Bulgaria, has been good enough to send a letter, dated "Palace of Sophia, 6th March, 1902," conveying "sincere wishes to your brethren ornithologists," &c., together with a budget of papers and pamphlets, chiefly from his own pen. Among these may be mentioned—"Ornithological Excursions," "A Journey to Finland," "The Hoopoe" (Natural History of the Birds in Middle Europe); an ornithological monthly journal, edited by the German Association for the Protection of Birds—contents of the second 12 years; "Protection of Birds in England," "The English Sparrow in North America," "List of Books of the Ornithological Society of Munich;" *Oölogie*, an international organ for the promotion of this science; *Ornithologie*, besides twenty-five other papers of more or less interest.

Reviews.

CATALOGUE OF BIRDS' EGGS.

["Catalogue of the Collection of Birds' Eggs in the British Museum (Natural History). Vol. i.—Ratitæ. Carinatæ (Tinamiformes—Lariformes)."] By Eugene W. Oates. London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1901. 8vo, pp. i.-xxiii., 1-252.]

PERSONS who imagine that collecting birds' eggs is a pastime on a par with the acquisition of obliterated postage stamps will be surprised to find that so great an institution as the British Museum has a collection exceeding 50,000 specimens in its charge, and considers this branch of ornithology of sufficient importance to devote a special descriptive catalogue to its oological collection. The first volume of this work has just been issued, under the direction of Dr. Ray Lankester, and deals with 520 species belonging to the *Ratitæ* and *Carinatæ*, which, as the preface states, is "about one-third of the total number of living or recently extinct birds" enumerated

in the "Hand-List" as included in those sub-classes, which embrace Emu, Cassowary, Mallee Fowl, &c.; Quails, Pigeons, Rails, Grebes, Penguins, Petrels, and Albatrosses; Terns, Gulls, &c. About 100 of the species described are Australian.

Ten years ago the whole of the Museum's collection was arranged and labelled by Miss Emily Sharpe, under the supervision of her father (Dr. Bowdler Sharpe) and the late Mr. Henry Seebohm. The present catalogue is the work of Mr. E. W. Oates, known to Australian ornithologists as the editor of the second edition of Hume's "Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds," and as the author of the earlier volumes of the "Aves" in the "Fauna of British India." Dr. Lankester says Mr. Oates "has performed his work conscientiously," which means much, and every student of the volume will consider this well-deserved praise.

The author has followed the classification and nomenclature of Dr. Sharpe's "Hand-List of the Genera and Species of Birds"—*i.e.*, commencing with the *Ratitæ* (Emu, &c.) instead of ending with them, and in the arrangement of his matter has made the book what a "classic" should be. Each technical name and its authority stand out clearly; synonyms and sufficient references follow, the latter including invariably the "Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum" and the "Hand-List" previously mentioned. Then follows a concise description of shape and colour of the eggs, with dimensions in inches, succeeded by numbers, localities, &c., of the originals. In addition to the specific description, an admirable practice has been adopted of giving a general one, or "family likeness," of the eggs as a heading to each order.

At the end of the volume 18 plates are given, depicting in colour lithography 134 species of eggs. These are the special work of Messrs. Pawson and Brailsford, Sheffield, from drawings by Mr. H. Gronvold, and, if anything, exceed in excellence former good work by that firm. The selection of a rough-grained paper has been the means of imparting to the pictures of the larger eggs a *vraisemblance* to the superficial (pitted) appearance of the natural shell, which is usually lacking in a delineation of such an object. The only fault is in Plate I., in which the too-pronounced "high lights" detract from its beauty from an artistic standpoint.

Australians will naturally turn first to the history and descriptions of the eggs of their own birds, and Mr. Oates records that the first acquisition of a collection of these by the British Museum was made in 1856, when Sir D. Cooper presented a small assortment. In 1881 Gould's historical collection of Australian and European eggs was acquired. More recently (1891) some eggs, chiefly of sea-birds taken in North-West Australia by Mr. J. J. Walker during the

voyage of H.M.S. *Penguin*, were presented by the Admiralty; and in 1893 Mr. F. A. Philbrick, Q.C., donated a collection made by his son, principally in Gippsland. Mr. Donald Mackintosh, of Victoria (who, although not strictly an ornithologist, is nevertheless a famous "bird collector"), on the occasion of his pigeon-shooting trip to the Old World in 1900, gave a small collection of the eggs of his native country. By no means the least valuable were the rare specimens presented the same year by our fellow-member of the Aust. O.U., the well-known Queensland collector, Mr. C. A. Barnard, while Mr. E. S. Moulden, of Adelaide, is also credited with interesting specimens.

Individualizing more critically some of the Australian species, there are several points worth drawing attention to. It will be noticed that under "Emu" (p. 5), two eggs are recorded as presentations (respectively by Sir T. Davenport and Dr. Milligen) from Tasmania. If they were really collected on that island before the extirpation of the species there they are indeed notable relics, besides possessing a value in that the species was possibly distinct from the mainland bird, as the Kangaroo Island species was.

Mr. Oates has kept the Australian Swamp-Quails under the one species, *Synacus australis*. But in describing the eggs he states that the specimen from Tasmania is "fully twice the size of any other egg of this species in the collection." Surely, if oology counts for anything, this is expert evidence that there is a larger-sized Swamp-Quail in Tasmania (and adjacent parts), which field ornithologists have always held to be distinct from the common kind.

It appears that the egg of the Chestnut-backed (Bustard) Quail (*Turnix castanonota*) was figured half a century ago in *Fortpflanz. ges. Vög.*, tab. xii. (Thienemann), although some writers have stated it to be "undescribed."* It is strange that Gould did not describe these eggs, seeing there were seven in his collection, with data "Port Essington, N. Australia," probably collected by Gilbert. It is a pity it did not occur to Mr. Oates to figure one of these specimens, which, he says, "are quite different from those of all the other species of this group," instead of that of the familiar *Turnix velox*, more particularly as the figures are, with few exceptions, those of eggs not previously delineated. The previous figure, being buried in an old German publication, is not available to the majority of readers, and was virtually unknown.

Mr. Oates will certainly popularise the "Catalogue of Birds' Eggs" by the free use of vernacular names of birds in his de-

* A footnote in "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," Campbell (1900), gives a provisional description. This has been fully established as correct by the description of eggs from the same locality in the work under review.

scriptive matter; but, although it is difficult to say where a Dove ends and a Pigeon begins, Australians will probably never learn to call *all* the Bronzewings *Doves*. Exception must be taken to the statement (page 80) that "there can be little doubt that the eggs of all Pigeons are white when first laid." When Mr. Oates has had the pleasure of examining the eggs of *Chalcophaps*, *Geophaps*, *Lophophaps*, &c., he will no doubt observe that the shells possess a very decided light creamy tint or tone.

The two eggs from New South Wales, described as pertaining to *Gallinula tenebrosa*, are not typical, if they belong to that species at all. They should have a stony colour, not creamy-white. Moreover, the dimensions are much too small. However, Mr. Oates may enjoy the comfortable reflection that he has been in very good company, and has not been the first author to go astray over the Gallinule's eggs from New South Wales.

The description of the egg of the Cape Petrel (*Daption capensis*) may stand as a provisional one till authenticated examples come to hand. One or other of the Antarctic exploration vessels now out will doubtless fall in with a rookery of these most interesting Petrels.

Students and collectors generally will look forward expectantly to the completion of the volumes, comprising a most interesting and valuable work of reference.

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IN THE SOUDAN.

[*"Bird-Hunting on the White Nile: a Naturalist's Experiences in the Soudan."* By Harry F. Witherby, F.Z.S., &c. London: The office of *Knowledge*, 1902. 8vo, pp. 1-117.]

IN the reprint from *Knowledge* entitled "Bird-Hunting on the White Nile," Mr. Witherby describes his experiences on an ornithological expedition as far south as El-Kawa, some 150 miles beyond Khartoum. The habits of people and birds are depicted both by pen and camera, and the difficulties which beset such a journey are most interestingly portrayed. The trip "was made during the driest months of a very dry year," which is said by the author to be in one sense a favourable time, there being very few visitors then. Seventy birds and 17 mammals are listed as collected and observed, but it is noted that 141 species were identified, of which only four are recorded as nesting. The latter included a small Lark (*Pyrrhuloxia olivacea*, Temm.), two Doves (*Turtur ambiguus*, Boc., and *Oena capensis*, Linn.), and the smallest of the many Shrikes found (*Nilaus afer*, Lath.) Birds seem to have been plentiful all along the river, but the only one new to science was a tiny Fantail Warbler (*Cisticola aridula*, Witherby). Two rare species were, however, secured—a Horned Owl (*Scops leucates*, Temm.), and a Goatsucker (*Caprimulgus eximius*, Temm.)

Besides being in "a country of dense bushes and tame birds," where the temperature ranged from 110° to 115° in the shade during the warm portions of the day, and having surroundings only of thorny acacia bushes and sand, there were many difficulties beyond sandstorms of several varieties to overcome. One was the way in which birds worked against the collector, by some common one alarming the rarer kinds; another was their skill in hiding. The author says:—

"The birds living among the trees depended upon the thickness of the branches and twigs for concealment, and although there were few trees with leaves, it was extraordinary how perfect a protection they were afforded. Even the most brightly coloured birds were hidden in a thick mimosa bush or acacia tree, and rather than fly away would retire into the thickest part of a tree. . . . I heard a shrill note coming from the middle of a bush which was composed of thin and wiry green shoots, leafless, but so interlaced that the birds were perfectly hidden. I kicked the bush, but the birds would not budge. I walked all round it several times, but the birds only travelled round to the opposite side."

One needs to be an enthusiast in such a quest as Mr. Witherby had. An extract from his book will show not only that he has written in a popular rather than a scientific style, but that his heart was in his work. It will also perhaps induce the reader to do what is worth doing, peruse the book for himself:—

"On one of our last evenings of camp life I was trying to shoot some small bats that were flitting round the tents. . . . As I was standing there a hawk-like bird appeared like a ghost from over the river. As it passed me I raised my gun mechanically and fired, but the bird went on and in ten yards or so was out of sight. I thought no more about it, as my gun was loaded with dust shot, and the bird seemed large and some distance off. Tiring at length of shooting by moonlight, I returned to the camp, and, calling for a lantern, went to search for the bat at the place I had marked with a heap of mud. As the light flashed on the spot, there lying dead with outspread wings was the glorious golden Goatsucker. I picked it up and rushed madly to my companions. . . . I often dream of a broad river flowing through a desert land lit by the bright moon; of a ghost-like form and a chance shot; then I see a stately Arab bearing a lantern, and suddenly the light flashes upon a glorious bird shining like burnished gold all spread out upon the sand."

Report on Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) Rookeries, Phillip Island.*

Melbourne, 11th April, 1902.

To the Council, Australasian Ornithologists' Union.

I BEG to report that on the 29th, 30th, and 31st March, accompanied by Messrs. A. P. and J. F. Smith, who have been acquainted with the locality from childhood, I visited and

* In view of members of the next Congress of the Aust. O.U. visiting the rookeries on Phillip Island during the egg season in November, and thereafter to formulate some scheme for the protection of Mutton-Birds, not only on that island but in other localities in Bass Strait, &c., if necessary, it occurred to the Council it would be as well to possess some evidence as to the state of the rookeries during the "birdling"