

maximus measuring nearly 17 x 13 inches. An average egg of the extinct Madagascar bird (*Æpyornis*) measures about 12 inches in length.

Protection of the Nutmeg-Pigeon.

REFERRING to an effort (see "Report for 1901-02," *Emu*, vol. ii., p. 185) by the Aust. O.U. to get the Nutmeg-Pigeons (*Myristicivora spilorrhoa*) properly protected on the islands off the North Queensland coast, whither the birds resort to breed, the Under-Secretary, Brisbane, has been good enough to cause preliminary inquiries to be made, and has forwarded to the Council of the Union the following correspondence:—

(1.) From Mr. J. N. Parkes, Home Secretary's Department, Townsville:—

"I had your (Under-Secretary's) letter published in the local columns of the Townsville *Daily Bulletin*. There have been no letters written to the paper, and no one has made any inquiries or offered an opinion excepting those to whom I have spoken. They all agree that it would be advisable to take action in the manner indicated by the hon. secretary Aust. O.U."

(2.) From Mr. C. Pennefather, Comptroller-General, Prisons Department, Brisbane:—

"The Torres Strait Pigeons commence their flight from New Guinea about the beginning of October, as a rule, and stream down the coast as far as the Palm Islands in countless thousands (I might, I think, safely say millions). They settle on almost all the many wooded islands and islets along the line of coast from Cape York to the vicinity of the south end of Hinchinbrook Island. They also settle on some of the islands in Torres Strait.

"They nest on the islands they settle on, and feed on the mainland, principally on nutmegs, and it is understood that the male birds carry over food to the females sitting on their nests. I am not, however, sure about this, but the fact remains that on many islands on which they nest there are no trees but mangroves, and consequently there is no fruit nearer than the mainland. In January and February the birds, with their young, now strong enough for the voyage, take flight to New Guinea.

"There can be no doubt that the indiscriminate slaughter which takes place on some of the islands while the birds are nesting must tend to reduce the natural increase, but it is a question whether this has any considerable effect upon the numbers which annually flock down the coast, and it does not follow that because the pigeons come to this part of the coast at a certain time that they may not have another breeding season in New Guinea. The fact that these birds afford a fresh meat diet to many settlers on the coast, as well as to the *employés* on the *bêche-de-mer* and pearl-fishing craft, is worthy of consideration.

"The question as to whether these birds should be protected or partially protected or not during their stay on the Queensland coast is a difficult one to give an opinion upon. If the close season is fixed as from the 1st November to 1st April, and it is strictly observed, I do not think many birds would fall to the gun, as they do not settle down to breed until about the 1st November, and they leave the islands for New Guinea before the 1st April, consequently they would be wholly protected."

[The assumption in Mr. Pennefather's interesting remarks that these Pigeons may possibly breed a second time in New Guinea is scarcely feasible, seeing that migratory birds usually only breed in the highest latitudes of their range.

The Nutmeg-Pigeon is at present protected from 1st November to 30th April in each year. According to some authorities a few of the birds arrive as early as September, while eggs have been taken in October. (See also Mr. P. Cochrane's article in this issue, p. 47.) If the close season were extended, say, a month, at the beginning (making it from 1st October to 30th April, and properly observing it) it would probably be sufficient protection for the Pigeons for the time being.—EDS.]

The British Museum of Natural History.

HIS Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Sir George Clarke, F.R.S., has received a letter from the British Museum authorities which sets forth certain desiderata.

The Council of the Aust. O.U. has pleasure in giving publicity to the ornithological requirements, with the hope that some collecting members of the Union will deem it a privilege to assist one of the most noble institutions in the kingdom.

Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe, who has charge of the Ornithological Department, writes:—"I should much like to have a carefully-prepared series of Victorian species. We have a gradually increasing set of Australian birds, but it is so difficult to get them with proper dates, sexes, and moults:

"Perhaps we could give an exchange. Again, I should like some birds in spirits. We want specimens of the leading genera of Passeres, and I much want a couple of skeletons of the Crested (Square-tailed) Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*)."

Review.

"PARRAKEETS." — Mr. D. Seth-Smith, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., the editor of the *Avicultural Magazine*, is issuing, under this title, in six parts (price 33s.), a concise and instructive description of the Parrakeets, Lorikeets, Love-Birds, and Parrotlets which are or are likely to be imported into Great Britain. Not only are instructions for the treatment of the various species in captivity