

seeing living specimens an opportunity of observing how closely these species resemble each other in everything but the fact that the yellow in the second species replaces the red in the first.

The fifth part of this work should prove of exceptional interest to members of the Aust. O.U., since all the 15 species dealt with are from Australia. There are four fine coloured plates, depicting Barnard's, Bauer's (Port Lincoln), and the Many-coloured Parakeets, from the pencil of Mr. Goodchild; Yellow-vented and Red-vented "Blue Bonnets" (Grönvold); and the Golden-shouldered Parrakeet (Renault). The text is, as usual, well worth perusal; but it is questionable whether the Red-backed Rosella (*Platycercus erythropeplus*) should have been included in Mr. Seth-Smith's book. Is it a valid species? It is certainly not known to Australian ornithologists. Mr. Seth-Smith mentions a pair as having bred in Britain, and Count Salvadori described a pair in the Zoological Gardens (London), but the probabilities are that it is a hybrid, as the species of the family to which it belongs are known to occasionally interbreed, and, the species being so closely related, hybrids between these birds would most likely prove fertile.

Correspondence.

AUST. O.U. OR AUSTRAL. O.U.?

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—The use of Aust. O.U. (Australasian Ornithologists' Union) so as to distinguish the abbreviation for our Union from the A.O.U. adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union, has led some of my friends to ask does Aust. O.U. mean "Austrian" Ornithologists' Union. Since Aust. O.U. is liable to be thus misconstrued, I would suggest that Austral. O.U. be a happier use of the abbreviation.—Yours, &c.,

A. MATTINGLEY.

Melbourne, 6/7/03.

VERNACULAR NAMES.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—With regard to a footnote in *The Emu*, vol. ii., No. 3, and the paper on vernacular names in last issue, I would like to make a few remarks.

It is obviously essential that we should all use the same systematic names, but so long as we do so, is it of very great importance what English names we use? What difference can it make if I speak of the Waxbill instead of the Red-browed Finch, or the Tomtit instead of the Yellow-rumped Tit, or the Red Lory instead of the Crimson Parrakeet, if I give the scientific names also; always supposing that the name has not been widely applied to any other Australian bird? And in the case of birds which are generally known by a particular name, of what use is it to

attempt to alter it? As an example I may mention the Laughing Jackass. Is there anyone anywhere who calls this bird the Brown Kingfisher, or is there ever likely to be? Of course a name may imply an error, as in the term "Mopoke," or that of "Curlew" for "Stone-Plover," but this is an entirely different case. As to the question of hyphens, it seems to me of very small importance whether we use them or not.—I am, &c.,

H. E. HILL.

Guildford, Western Australia, 4/8/03.

[The only comment necessary on this letter is to point out that all ornithologists do not use the same scientific names, and that Mr. Hill differs entirely in opinion, *re* the matters discussed, from the principal bird-students of France, Germany, and America (the latter including some of the leading ornithologists in the world; Great Britain is to some extent behindhand). If ornithology is ever to be an exact science—which it ought to be—it must be clearly recognized that no detail is unimportant, that everything tending to confusion must be avoided, and the question arises, Why should not Australasia take her proper part in the matter?—H. K.]

Notes and Notices.

THE third Congress of the Aust. O.U. will be held this year at Hobart, from the 24th to 26th November, when many important ornithological matters will be tabled. The usual camp-out excursion will probably follow the business of the Congress, and the popular lecture—"The Islands of Bass Strait," which was so successfully given in Melbourne, will be repeated at Hobart. It is hoped that as many members as possible will comply with the Hon. Secretary's invitation to be present at this Congress.

THE second coloured plate (Honey-eaters), members will be glad to learn, is in progress. To the "Coloured Figure Fund" the Council desire to return thanks for the following donations:—Miss Brumby (Tasmania), 5s.; Mr. J. R. M'Clymont, M.A. (Tasmania), 6s.; Mr. Thos. Tindale (Victoria), 5s.; Mr. C. E. Smart (Victoria), 5s.; S. Robinson (Queensland), 2s.; Mr. M. Woodhouse (Victoria), 1s. 8d.

FROM Yakutsk, Siberia, under date 20/6/03, on a post card, Mr. Robert Hall writes:—"The tundra, the Mecca of my pilgrimage, is reached. The land, so full of birds, teeming with mosquitoes, and covered with flowers, holds quite a new charm for me. To-morrow we start for a real piece of tundra; and what Australian birds will be met? We have already collected along the great valley of the Lena River, and notes of geographical distribution will surely be of interest. We have been 14 days travelling from Lake Baikal, having used 70 horses, a river boat, and 1,200 miles on a stern-wheeler."