

From Magazines, &c.

BIRDS TEACHING YOUNG TO SING.—A note by Mr. W. H. Parkin in the February *Zoologist* (p. 71) has a bearing on the question whether song is acquired or inherited. "A Sky-Lark had young ones just out of nest; on the old bird returning and feeding them, it remained on the ground close to the fledglings, and broke out into full song, which it continued for about a minute."

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MIGRATION OF WADERS.—An article by Austin H. Clark, in *The Auk* for April, deals with "The Migration of Certain Shore Birds," a fascinating subject. Starting from the premise that birds prefer a beam wind, and therefore fly diagonally across the "trades," Mr. Clark sketches the probable routes taken by the Golden Plover (*Charadrius dominicus*) in its migrations from North to South America and back.

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HARD PRESSED.—Mr. A. E. Kitson, F.G.S., read a newspaper cutting relating to the pursuit of a Laughing Jackass by a Hawk. The bird sought refuge within the walls of an hotel, and, in its extremity, dived through the upper pane of one of the commercial room windows, and then, after making several ineffectual efforts to pass through a large mirror over the fireplace, regained the street by "taking a header" through another closed window.—*Victorian Naturalist*, April, 1905.

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CELEBRATED ORNITHOLOGISTS.—*The Condor* for March-April establishes a good precedent with its four photographs of eminent ornithologists—Dr. P. L. Sclater, Prof. Cabanis, Mr. Howard Saunders, and Count Schimdhoffen. A *fac-simile* of a page of MS. of Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, with a lithograph of the Prince that strongly reminds one of his great cousin; an article by Leonhard Stejneger in support of Palmén's theory that birds migrate along the routes whereby they anciently immigrated into a country; and a number of local bird-notes, complete the issue.

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AUSTRALIAN BIRDS IN ENGLAND.—At the Crystal Palace Bird Show held in January last, in the Parrakeet class the first prize fell to a Varied Lorikeet (*Ptilosclera versicolor*) owned by Miss C. R. Little. Mallee (*Barnardius barnardi*) and Yellow-collared (*B. zonarius*) Parrakeets and King (*Aprosmictus cyanopygius*) and Red-winged (*Ptilotes erythropterus*) Lories were also on view, according to *The Avicultural Magazine* (Feb., 1905), as well as a hybrid "Red-rumped Rosella." In the class for Grass-Finches, &c., a Yellow-rumped Finch (*Munia flaviprymna*), owned by Mr. H. E. Pier, won first prize and special for the rarest bird in the show. A pair of Red-faced Finches (*Bathilda ruficauda*) and a Crimson Finch (*Neochmia phaelon*) were also shown.

REGURGITATIVE FEEDING.—Mrs. Irene G. Wheelock, who contributes a paper on "The Regurgitative Feeding of Nestlings" to *The Auk*, Jan., 1905, has records of 187 broods of young birds she has had under observation, which show that in every case where the young were hatched in a naked or semi-naked state they were, for a period varying from one day to four weeks, fed by regurgitation—i.e., the parents swallowed the food, carried it in their craws to the young, and then disgorged it, sometimes partly digested, into the latter's mouths. Young birds, however, which when hatched are covered with down were found by the writer to be fed directly with fresh food from the time of hatching.

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DUCK AND EAGLE.—In *The Geelong Naturalist* (Dec., 1904) Mr. J. F. Mulder has the following observation:—"In going over one of the forest rises I came suddenly on a Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*), which was standing about forty yards away, in front of me. It appeared hurt, for as I rode on it flapped along the ground, dragging its legs behind it, the acting being so clever that I really thought it had been shot. I was not the only one deceived. A pair of Whistling Eagles (*Haliastur sphenurus*) kept swooping down on it as it was fluttering along the ground. When the Eagles darted down the Duck lay flat in the dust, but started on again when I approached. My suspicions were aroused by its getting gradually further away. At last it rose straight up in the air, rivalling the Eagles themselves in vigour of flight, and disappeared."

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A NATURE CALENDAR.—Mr. James R. McClymont, M.A., supplies *The Zoologist* (April) with "Monthly Notes for 1902, taken in the South of Tasmania." Not the least interesting, albeit brief, are the bird observations. On the 17th August he notes "*Eucalyptus globulus* in flower." The following day "Swift Lorikeets appear." About the end of November "Swift Lorikeets disappear." In the interim did the Lorikeets breed? Or were they merely attracted by the flowering blue gums? These are interesting questions. Some records kept during November proved that the Magpies (*Gymnorhina*) commence carolling about one hour before sunrise, although in one instance a bird was heard 1 hour 18 minutes before sunrise. Of course the dawn is comparatively long in November. Would the Magpies commence so early before sunrise, say, during a winter month?

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SUB-SPECIES.—A paper in *The Auk* for January, by Dr. Jonathan Dwight, on "Plumage Wear in its Relation to Pallid Sub-species" holds out some prospect of relief from the interminable splitting of species. To establish a new "geographical race" it is necessary, says in effect the writer, to show that the difference relied on exists

in the feather at the time of growth—that is, in the birds at the moult; for the differences observable in birds from different localities in breeding plumage may be due to climate acting merely on the feather of the individual, but leaving the species as such unaltered. No doubt the conscientious application of Dr. Dwight's test would considerably reduce the number of American sub-species, and so go to obviate the need for trinomial nomenclature. This is a road on which we in Australia have not yet travelled so far as our American cousins, but it is well to be wise in time.

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BIRD-KINDNESS.—The Rev. R. G. Pearse (Natal), writing to a recent number of *The Spectator*, states:—"I beg to give you an account of bird-kindness witnessed by a doctor, another minister, and myself here in Durban. During an exceptionally heavy tropical rain, three weeks ago, two Ducks of the common half-bred native and Bombay variety got washed in the flood down the Umgeni River, which flows through the Town Gardens. The Ducks both got entangled in the barbed wire and wire netting which crosses from bank to bank. One managed by much flapping of wings to extricate itself; the other seemed, however, to be on the point of drowning, when a large male Ostrich stalked out of the bush and waded into the river, lifted it bodily out of the water, and carried it ashore by one wing. The Duck was not badly hurt, but its rescuer was severely torn on its thigh muscles by the barbed wire. I may mention that this all is the more remarkable as the Ostrich, with rare exceptions, buries its head in the sand during a storm, and will starve to death sooner than move."

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SINGULAR SITE FOR A SATIN-BIRD'S BOWER.—Writing in *The Geelong Naturalist* (Dec., 1904) Mr. J. F. Mulder states:—"A small party of Satin Bower-Birds (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) has built a bower in a pine tree over my kitchen at Bambra (10th October, 1892). They are very interesting, and amusing in their habits, and make such strange noises, sometimes like a cat snarling, and sometimes a whirring noise like an Owl; then again they imitate other birds so closely as to deceive anyone who did not know, and make one think there were five or six different birds in the tree. When watching these birds they were continually jumping about from one branch to another, and appeared to be playing together. As there were no black ones among them, I concluded that most of the birds were females or young males. The bower, which had a passage right through it, was composed of a lot of broken pine branches, laid across other limbs of the tree and built close to the trunk. In flying from one place to another the birds appeared to move off in a succession of small flights. Two or three of the flock fly to a neighbouring tree; as soon as they alight, two or three more start. The first lot go on, then two or three more fly out from the first tree. The birds in the second tree go to the

third; those in the third fly to a fourth tree, and so on until the whole flock has gone."

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NESTS AND EGGS OF VARIED HONEY-EATER (*Philotis versicolor*).—In *The Victorian Naturalist* for March (vol. xxi., p. 167) Mr. A. J. North, Ornithologist, Australian Museum, has described a nest and two eggs of the Varied Honey-eater collected on Franklin Island, off the north-eastern coast of Queensland. The specimens, together with the parent birds, were taken by Mr. A. F. Smith, 16th October, 1904.

The nest is an open cup-shaped structure, rather scantily formed of fibrous rootlets, held together with plant down intermingled with webs and egg-bags of spiders, the inside being sparingly lined with pale brown fibre, and at the bottom with a small quantity of silky white plant down. It was built in a shrub at a height of 7 feet from the ground, and is firmly attached by the rim on one side to a thin leafy branch, two leaves also being worked on to the outer portion of the opposite side, where Mr. Smith informed Mr. North it was fastened to two upright twigs. The eggs are similar in colour to those of *Philotis sonora*.

Mr. North concludes with the remark that "similar eggs taken by Mr. E. M. Cornwall, of Cairns, have recently been described as the eggs of *Philotis fasciogularis*."* Regarding this assertion, Mr. Cornwall writes:—"With reference to the eggs of *P. fasciogularis*, I am quite satisfied that my identification is complete, but evidently I made a mistake in jumping to the conclusion that the bird, nest, and eggs taken by Mr. A. F. Smith on the Franklin Islands were the same species. I do not think there is anything remarkable in the fact that the eggs of both species are similar, for the birds are about the same size and very closely allied."

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Bird-Lore.—The last number of this magazine to hand (Jan.-Feb., 1905, vol. viii., No. 1, pp. 45-120) has for a principal feature a record of what is being done in the way of bird protection in North America. "The History of the Audubon Movement" tells what the Audubon Societies and the American O.U. have been doing in this direction, and the results make an Australian ornithologist jealous. Not only do the first-named societies publish a magazine of their own, "to advance the work already so well under way, give stability and permanence to that work, and broaden the sphere of effort in such directions as may with reason suggest themselves," but individual members and affiliated bodies spare no effort in the cause. With a membership of about 30,000, of course much may be done. Massachusetts claims the honour of having started the present system of State Audubon Societies. From humble beginnings in 1884-5 the Biological Survey, in connection with the U.S.A. Department of Agriculture, has grown. From Massachusetts the movement of bird-protection spread throughout the States. Maps are

* *Emu*, vol. iv., p. 137.

given to show what has been done. *Bird-Lore* notices the fact that in North Carolina the efforts of the labourers in the cause have been so far recognized by the State Government that it acts in that region as a "Game Commission," "with powers of appointing bird and game wardens, who can arrest violators of the game laws." One of our great mistakes in Australia has been that everything of this kind has been left in the hands of the police, who are so overweighted with duties that what would naturally be considered an outside one has small chance of being attended to. The coloured plate in this number continues the series of Warblers, and a very full Christmas bird census occupies pp. 22-31.

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"BIRD NOTES FROM OLINDA VALE."—In *The Victorian Naturalist*, vol. xxi., p. 162, new ground has been broken by Messrs. C. L. Barrett and E. B. Nicholls—with nesting notes of familiar birds, illustrated by the camera by Mr. C. P. Kinane.

The majority of the notes were made in the valley of the Olinda Creek about three miles south-east of Lilydale. Weekly visits were paid the district during the spring and summer months, with the result that 35 species were observed nesting, while photographs of nests and eggs or young of many were secured. Although five eggs for a clutch are sometimes recorded for the Spotted Pardalote (*P. punctatus*) it is surely a rare occurrence to see five young reared. One of Mr. Kinane's successful pictures shows a row of five spotted youngsters (4 weeks old) perched on a twig. Another picture shows a newly-hatched Bronze-Cuckoo in the act of ejecting its foster-nestling—a young Wren. (The subject of this illustration has been enlarged and is reproduced in this issue of *The Emu*. (See plate I.)

The other photographs reproduced in *The Naturalist* depict a female Rufous-breasted Thickhead near her nest containing two fledglings, and a Bronze-Cuckoo (16 days old) being fed by a foster-parent (*Acanthiza pusilla*).

Although not an Australian bird, these interesting field observations conclude with a note on the Starling (imported). It appears that last year a settler picked 18 cases of cherries from 20 trees. From the same trees this season he only collected about 2 lbs. While away on a fishing excursion one Sunday afternoon the Starlings swooped down and cleared his orchard. *Moral: Don't go fishing on a Sunday.*

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THE PERIOD OF INCUBATION.—In *The Avicultural Magazine* for March Dr. A. G. Butler has a valuable article on the duration of incubation in different species, a little-worked but rich field for study. The desire for exact knowledge, the probability of a connection between the duration of incubation (as of gestation) and of life, and the obvious importance to the breeder of birds of knowing when eggs will hatch, should all have tended to direct attention to

the subject, as the writer points out; but zeal for egg-collecting would seem, in England at least, to have outweighed these considerations, and, copious as are the data which Dr. Butler has collected, one cannot but be struck with the great number of gaps yet to be supplied. The observations recorded are almost all of birds in captivity, and the conclusion pointed to is that the longer-lived birds take the longer time to hatch their eggs. Appended is a list of the Australian birds mentioned by Dr. Butler, with the duration of incubation given for each; members of the Union resident here may be able to make useful comparisons from their existing records or from future field and aviary notes:—

SPECIES.	Duration of Incubation. Days.
Crimson Finch (<i>Neochmia phaeton</i>)	11-12
Red-browed Finch (<i>Ægitha temporalis</i>)	13
Gouldian Finch (<i>Poephila gouldiæ</i>)	15
Black-throated Grass-Finch (<i>P. cincla</i>)	12
Spotted-sided Finch (<i>Staganopleura guttata</i>)	12
Chestnut-eared Finch (<i>Tæniopygia castanotis</i>)	11
Bichenov Finch (<i>Stictoptera bichenovii</i>)	11
Plum-head Finch (<i>Aidemoseyne modesta</i>)	12
Satin Bower-Bird (<i>Ptilonorhynchus violaceus</i>)	21
Blue-bellied Lorikeet (<i>Trichoglossus nova-hollandiæ</i>)	23-26
Cockatoo-Parrakeet (<i>Calopsittacus nova-hollandiæ</i>)	21
Black-tailed Parrakeet (<i>Polytelis melanura</i>)	28
Red-winged Lory (<i>Ptilotes erythropterus</i>)	24
Pennant Parrakeet (<i>Platycercus pennantii</i>)	20
Pale-headed Parrakeet (<i>P. pallidiceps</i>)	21
Rosella Parrakeet (<i>P. eximius</i>)	21-24
Barnard Parrakeet (<i>Barnardius barnardi</i>)	21
Many-coloured Parrakeet (<i>Psephotus multicolor</i>)	18
Red-rumped Parrakeet (<i>P. hæmatonotus</i>)	22
Bourke Grass-Parrakeet (<i>Neophema bourkei</i>)	17-22
Blue-banded Parrakeet (<i>N. venusta</i>)	19
Turquoise Parrakeet (<i>N. — ?</i>)	20-22
Warbling Grass-Parrakeet (<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>)	18-20
Little Turtle-Dove (<i>Geopelia cuneata</i>)	12
Brush Bronze-wing (<i>Phaps elegans</i>)	15-18
Crested Bronze-wing (<i>Ocyphaps lophotes</i>)	19
Zosterops	9-10
Cockatoos	21

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AUSTRALIAN BIRDS IN ITALY.—The Rev. H. D. Astley, M.A., M.B.O.U., occupies a coign of vantage in his home at Ligure, in the Italian Riviera, that may well excite the envy of his less fortunately situated fellow-aviculturists abroad, and there is a touch of pardonable pride in his account, in *The Avicultural Magazine* for April, of a fine haul which he made for his aviaries on the 9th March last. On that day a vessel arrived at Genoa with a consignment of Australian birds, and Mr. Astley obtained four Bourke Grass-Parrakeets (*Neophema bourkei*), a pair of Many-

coloured Parrakeets (*Psephotus multicolor*), a pair each of the Painted (*Emblema picta*), Yellow-rumped (*Munia flaviprymna*), and Crimson (*Neochmia phaeon*) Finches, and a Gamboge-headed Gouldian Grass-Finch (*Poephila gouldiae*). The Yellow-rumped Finches were quite new to Mr. Astley, so he gave a full description of them. An editorial note mentions that eleven of these rare Finches had just reached a London dealer, of which four had ultimately gone to the Zoo. It is to be hoped Mr. Astley's birds do well. They will not find themselves alone as captives in the strange land, for in another paper in the same number Mr. Astley, describing one of his outdoor aviaries, mentions as among its occupants "Ruficauda" Finches, Blue-winged Grass-Parrakeets, Diamond Sparrows, Bronze-wings, and Diamond and Peaceful Doves. Mr. Astley has much to tell of the Doves, evidently his favourites. "A pair of Diamond Doves in perfect condition, sitting cooing and preening their feathers in an orange tree, with the golden fruit hanging over their small grey heads, and the brilliant blue of the Mediterranean in the background, is worth seeing." One wonders if the tiny strangers are ever homesick for the south. Probably nostalgia is a human ill that birds know nothing of, and yet—it is a far cry from the Riverina to the Riviera.

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OREOSCOPUS (SERICORNIS) GUTTURALIS.—In *The Proc. Roy. Soc., Queensland*, vol. vi., p. 244 (1889), Mr. C. W. De Vis described a new bird from North-Eastern Queensland as *Sericornis gutturalis*. On the discovery of its nest and eggs recently, and a further examination of skins, Mr. A. J. North, Ornithologist Australian Museum, has assigned the species a new genera—namely, *Oreoscopus*—and the very distinctive vernacular name "Fern-Wren." The Trustees of the Australian Museum received two nests with sets of eggs of this bird taken by Mr. H. Elgner, the eggs being widely different from those of the true *Sericornis*. A description of the nests and eggs appears in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, March (1905), p. 247. The covered nest (of which a photo. is given) appears very beautiful, composed of fresh green mosses, while the eggs are pure white entirely in one set, but in the other there were numerous faint purplish-red dots and spots on the surfaces. Mr. North extracts the following from Mr. Elgner's interesting field notes:—

"The first nest of *Sericornis gutturalis* I found was in November, 1903. In the following month I found another, built in the side of a gully, near the Upper Russell River, with an egg in it. The following day I flushed the bird from the nest, but only caught a glimpse of it as it rapidly passed over the fallen leaves lying on the ground. The nest now contained two eggs. The nest was visited on four occasions during the two succeeding days, and then it began to rain, continuing without a break for two more days. On visiting it the following morning, as I anticipated, part of the nest had been washed away with the water, and the eggs were lying broken on the clay below. On the 10th August, 1904, when on Black Mountain, I found another nest, con-

taining two fresh eggs, but did not see any bird about it. This nest was built in a similar position to the previous ones, being partially built in a hole in an almost perpendicular bank on the side of a gully overgrown with small ferns and mosses, rendering the nest nearly invisible, although the gully was close to a track. Returning to my camp, I provided myself with a butterfly net, and, as soon as it was quite dark, without boots, and carefully shading a candle-light, again visited the nest. Quickly placing my net over it, I caught the bird just as it was flying out, and took the nest and eggs. In the early part of October I found two more nests, with two eggs in each, which had been abandoned by the birds, as the yolks were dried up in them and adhering to the shell. The eggs in these nests were not pure white, as those previously found, but had a few small spots on the thicker end, so I did not know whether they belonged to the same bird or not. A few days later I was on the Macalister Range, when, coming down a gully, I saw a little bird with some moss in its bill run on to a piece of dried wood. Looking with my field glasses, I saw it was *Sericornis culturalis*. I went lower down the gully and up on the bank, and sat down among some bushes. The bird flew over to the opposite side of the creek, then back again, hopping within 4 feet of me. I kept very quiet. Then it went behind me, and flew over again to the other side of the creek. There was a very steep place where it disappeared. I watched it return four times into the gully, and gather moss off the rocks and go back to the same place, where later on I discovered the nest. Marking the spot, I returned a week later, on the 21st October, 1904, and found the bird sitting on two fresh eggs, which, together with the nest, I took. The eggs in this nest were also speckled on the thicker end."

Correspondence.

NATIVE NAMES OF BIRDS.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—We are neglecting a duty we owe to posterity by not collecting the aboriginal names of our birds. The aborigines are fast disappearing, and with them goes the original nomenclature of our avi-fauna. Were native names and other native knowledge of our birds collected and published we would no doubt find, on systematically tabulating them, that there was a connection between some species which so far has been hidden from systematists, and especially from field workers, but which was understood by the aboriginal children of nature, whose life was so closely bound up with the habits of our birds. Some of our field-workers have recorded that they had discredited information given them in the field by our aborigines, but on investigation had found the blacks' information correct. With pleasure I note that some of our field-workers, members of the A.O.U., have given native names when writing. Probably all the members of the A.O.U. would assist as far as they can in this patriotic and probably useful duty ere it be too late.—Yours, &c.,

Melbourne, 8/6/05.

A. H. E. MATTINGLEY.

[In connection with this subject reference should be made to