

## Production of Podargus Call

(Accepted as read before the Brisbane session R.A.O.U.)

BY A. H. E. MATTINGLEY, C.M.Z.S.

SOME time ago a gentleman remarked to me that he had a Podargus (*Podargus strigoides*) which had the feathers of one wing cut off. He intended to destroy it, because he had grown tired of feeding it, and on account of the bird not being able to fly away when liberated. Desiring to save the life of the interesting nocturnal bird, I obtained it, and released it in my garden at Kew, Victoria. I resolved to feed it until it could fly away and hunt for itself. The bird gradually became fairly tame, and readily took pieces of meat from my hand. Any stray mice that I captured it ate ravenously. In course of time it started its hooting call during the night, and occasionally a wild mate, attracted by its nocturne, would make its appearance. These birds became so accustomed to my proximity to them that they allowed me to get within a few feet of them whilst they were calling. I was enabled thereby to observe how the Podargus' hooting note was produced. With its head elevated at an angle of about 30 degrees, with its bill fully closed, and with throat distended, the bird pulsates its throat, giving forth a rapid vibrating note, sounding at a distance like "Oom-oom-oom-oom-oom," but when close to the bird the call of a single "oom" or hoot I found consists of two notes produced not unlike "Too-roo, too-roo, too-roo," emitted in an almost continuous delivery, ranging from 14 "ooms" or hoots to 158 "ooms" without cessation. From lengthy observations I was able to ascertain that the greatest number of notes was produced on moonlight nights, especially about 11 o'clock. Sometimes the bird uttered a few hoots during the daytime. This occurred more often about 6 p.m. On several occasions I timed the duration of the calls, and found them uttered at about 6 "ooms" to the second. As a rule, there is the succession of calls uttered by the bird, ranging from 2 seconds' to about 27 seconds' duration. The whole series of calls were emitted during the space of about 3 minutes. Generally, the Podargus started its call in subdued tones, the full volume of sound being reached after a few hoots. The subdued tones had a ventriloquial effect.

For many years past I have taken notice of the Podargus in their home in the bush, but I have never yet heard them utter the familiar call of "mopoke," which note some persons attribute to this bird, although I have made special efforts to ascertain the truth of their statements.

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OMISSION.—The name of Dr. Ronald Hamlyn Harris, of the Queensland Museum, should be added to the list of members from Queensland who joined the R.A.O.U.