

From Magazines, &c.

Alterations in Nomenclature.—Mr. Gregory M. Mathews contributes a highly technical and argumentative article to *Novitates Zoologicae*, vol. xvii., December, 1910, "On Some Necessary Alterations in the Nomenclature of Birds." As a sample see foot-note, p. 51, this issue.

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A Bird of the Sierras.—Mr. Milton S. Ray, a well-known Californian ornithologist, in a recent issue of *The Condor* (Sept.-Oct., 1910), describes, in a most interesting paper, the discovery of the nest and eggs of the Grey-crowned Leucosticte (*L. tephrocotis tephrocotis*). The place of discovery was Pyramid Rock, "a lofty mountain of the great Sierran chain in the eastern portion of Eldorado County, California." The bird was first described by Swainson in 1831, and, although many have searched, the nest and eggs have remained unknown until 1910. Mr. Ray and his party had to traverse snow-drifts on the climb up the mountain, and the treasure they were in quest of was at length discovered beneath a pile of angular rocks.

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Birds of North-East Greenland.—"In Dr. J. Lindhard's account of the Danish expedition to North-East Greenland, 1906-8 (*Geogr. Journ.*, xxxv., p. 541), we are told that the 'ornithological booty of the expedition was unexpectedly abundant.' Particular attention was paid to the breeding-places of such species as *Tringa canutus*, *Calidris arenaria*, *Phalaropus fulicarius*, *Larus sabinii*, *L. eburneus*, *Anser leucopsis*, and *Lomateria spectabilis*. Of all these species, specimens—not only of full-grown birds, but also of eggs and of young in different stages of development—were procured. Of *Calidris arenaria* twenty-four eggs were obtained, and a breeding-place of thirty pairs of *Tringa canutus* was discovered. A specimen of *Fuligula marila*, a species new to Greenland, was brought home."—*The Ibis*, October, 1910.

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New Australian Sub-Species.—The trinomial system may simplify the nomenclature of birds. At the same time, it appears an easy medium for multiplying sub-species. According to the "Bulletin" (No. clxvii.) of the British Ornithologists' Club. Mr. G. M. Mathews exhibited and described the following as new :—

Ninox humeralis queenslandica.

Aphelocephala leucopsis pallida.

Also, according to "Bulletin" No. clxix. :—

Rhipidura albiscapa alisteri.

Pomatostomus superciliosus ashbyi.

And again, according to *Novitates Zoologicae* (December, 1910) :—

Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ diemenensis.

King George as a Bird-Lover.—In connection with the coronation of the King and Queen—the Royal Patrons of the R.A.O.U.—members will learn with interest that King George is not only a great bird-lover, but His Majesty possesses a good knowledge of ornithology. The Queen shares with the King his love for birds.

According to an English paper (*The Daily Mirror*), the King has an aviary of small birds in addition to Canaries, chiefly Gouldian Finches (*Poephila gouldiæ*), Spotted-sided Finches (*Staganopleura guttata*), Banded Finches (*Stictoptera tichenovii*), &c. When he was at Marlborough House this aviary was in a room adjoining his bedroom, and it has now been removed to Buckingham Palace, to an apartment close to the King's. The King knows his birds individually, and to a large extent attends to them personally, making real pets of them, his favourite being a sprightly Australian species, a Cockatoo-Parrakeet (*Calopsittacus nova-hollandiæ*). Strange to state, it was found as a "stray" in the gardens of Marlborough House some years ago. Now it sleeps in the King's bedroom, and delights to perch itself on the King's finger or on his shoulder, and chatters in soft, confiding voice, now and again repeating "Poor Joey," "Poor old Joey."

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A New Petrel for Australia.—In the *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales*, vol. xxxv., part 4, 26th October, Mr. A. F. Basset Hull, Sydney, has described a new Petrel, which he has named *Æstrelata montana* (Lord Howe Petrel). It is one of the largest and most robust of the *Æstrelata*, and does not closely resemble any other member of its genus. An adult skin and a series of eggs were taken on 3rd June, 1910, for Mr. Hull by Mr. Herbert Wilson, who also furnished interesting particulars concerning the habits of the bird. The bird, which is locally known as the "Big Hill Mutton-Bird," breeds on Mount Gower, Lord Howe Island. The mountain is 2,840 feet in height, and, together with Mount Lidgbird, rising sheer out of the ocean, makes an imposing picture, judging by the excellent photograph (taken by Mr. Hull during a previous trip) which accompanies the article. There are three other plates, from photographs by Mr. A. R. McCulloch, showing the breeding-place of *Æ. montana*, an adult bird at entrance to burrow under overhanging rock, and a downy nestling. The locality was very rocky, with a few patches of cutting-grass. The nests examined were in burrows some 6 feet in length, and mostly in wet ground. No nest was found in the open, but many were under the beetling boulders in inaccessible places. The nest itself was a large accumulation of cutting-grass, in which the single egg was almost concealed. All the burrows examined had two outlets. Average dimensions in inches of an egg, 2.52 x 1.9. Mr. Hull is to be congratulated upon the work he is doing amongst the little-known Petrels off our coast.

Reviews.

[“The Feather Trade : the Case for the Defence.”]

A PAPER by Mr. C. F. Downham, of Messrs. Sciana and Co. Ltd., read before the London Chamber of Commerce in November, 1910, has been issued in neatly printed pamphlet form. The paper purports to show “some facts and fallacies in connection with the trade in fancy feathers.” The author treats on “Rare Birds, their Habits and Habitats,” “The Ethics of Sport, &c.,” “The Egret,” “Birds-of-Paradise,” “India and Elsewhere,” &c. There is also a supplement containing some foreign laws and copies of official correspondence—altogether the result of much labour on the part of its author.

The Melbourne Chamber of Commerce has requested a criticism of the pamphlet from a local standpoint, and Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley has obligingly complied. He opens the subject by stating that the wearing of plumes of birds is a relic of barbarism, which has evolved, through ages, down to the present-day “fashion.” This fashion is catered for by certain business people, who establish a demand, each season, for certain articles for personal adornment, and so “set” the fashion. Rich and poor alike become its devotees, vying with each other in becoming as fashionable as their finances permit. The fashion of wearing the plumage of birds, as established by the “fashion” caterers, has become not only popular, but has grown to alarming proportions; indeed, to-day it is well-nigh insatiable. The feather traders, to supply this great demand, are depleting the world of certain of its useful birds. Eminent naturalists agree that the place of birds in nature is to police the earth and to preserve law and order in our fields, forests, and waters by keeping in check the ravages of noxious insects and animals which, if unchecked, would devastate these parts. Thus, it is maintained that birds are indissolubly linked with a country’s domestic economy and welfare. Therefore, it is asked, is the interest of comparatively a few plumage merchants to endanger the greater national interests of the agriculturist, pastoralist, orchardist, &c.?

From his connection with the trade Mr. Downham cannot be suspected of being an unbiassed writer, but he need not descend to disparaging remarks or irrelevances by calling his opponents in opinion, who have no “axes to grind,” “irresponsible sentimentalists,” “reckless members of bird protection societies,” &c.

In connection with the method of collecting Egret plumes, the value of “The Feather Trade” as a pamphlet is at once discounted by the evidence of its principal witness, M. Leon Laglaize, who at one time solemnly affirmed, as an eye-witness, that in Venezuela, “after the breeding season, when the young ones leave their nests to try their wings, the abandoned nests are searched, and a valuable amount of feathers is collected there; the feathers have been skilfully rolled in to furnish and soften the interior of the nest. These nest feathers are the best kind,

for they have been pulled off by the bird itself before laying the eggs." As such a statement is ridiculous, and contrary to natural history facts, it has been suggested that M. Laglaize has been led into witnessing the collecting of comparatively worthless moulted plumes as a blind to the real object of a planned slaughter. Under date 14/1/09, His Britannic Majesty's Minister in Venezuela, in a communication to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, states:—"There is no doubt that by far the larger part of the feathers collected and exported are taken from the birds shot for the purpose. The estimates as to the exact proportions vary slightly, but 75 per cent. may be taken as a reliable figure for the proportion of feathers collected from birds killed and 25 per cent. for the proportion of moulted feathers collected."

In chapter ii. Mr. Downham expresses doubts about the genuineness of Mr. Mattingley's photographs of the starving young Egrets in Riverina, New South Wales, without attempting to disprove the statements which appeared in *The Emu* (vol. vii., pp. 71-73) with the pictures. Mr. Downham hazards the opinion that the presence of the photographer was sufficient to cause the state of collapse of the nestlings as depicted in the photographs, which he terms "bogus," and even suggests that the parent birds were not killed at all, but were merely frightened away by the presence of Mr. Mattingley and his companion—downright presumption on the part of the clever writer of "The Feather Trade." The illustration of the nest of starvelings imploring food from passing birds shows plainly that the young ones were looking in different directions; therefore, they could not be looking at the photographer, as suggested. The R.A.O.U. would not have reproduced Mr. Mattingley's startling (and now historic) photographs had it not *bona-fide* evidence of the state of the rookery as observed after it had been raided by the plume-hunters. Furthermore, there is the statement by Colonel C. S. Ryan, a past President of the Union, that personally he was aware of another Egret rookery on a station in Riverina that was raided by plume-hunters. The rookery was annihilated. Colonel Ryan possesses the name of the principal raider, and can vouch that over 400 backs of birds containing plumes were sold to the trade. (*Vide* evidence of Colonel Ryan, "Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Plumage Prohibition Bill" (1908), p. 33.)

Even if "the Government of Venezuela" * is now legislating to protect its Heronries and to "farm" Egrets for the sake of "moulted" (?) feathers, in Australia, at all events, and doubtless elsewhere, the beautiful Egrets were cruelly slain during the breeding season, when the plumes were prime, for "the feather trade."

* It is stated that the prohibition refers to the small sub-State of Apuré only, and not to Federal Venezuela.

["Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania," by Alfred J. North, C.M.Z.S., &c.]

THIS publication of the Australian Museum proceeds slowly. The Trustees have issued part 1 of vol. iii. It was intended to publish 120 pages—about one-third of the volume—but insufficiency of paper has prevented this. It contains the Family *Cuculidæ* and the Sub-Family *Centropodinæ*, forming the concluding portion of the Order *Picariæ*; the Family *Loriidæ* and portion of the Family *Cacatuidæ* of the Order *Psittaci*. As in the previous parts, the illustrations of birds are reproduced from drawings made by the late Mr. Neville Cayley, who was also responsible for hand-colouring the plates of eggs in the coloured copies. Most of the figures of eggs of the Family *Cuculidæ* have been published in previous parts. The eggs of the different species of the Order *Psittaci* all being white, no plate of Australian birds' eggs is issued with this part. Mr. R. Etheridge, the Curator, advises that part 2 is already in the printer's hands, and will be gone on with immediately on the receipt of the paper, which, it is anticipated, will not be long delayed.

THE A.O.U. CHECK-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

["Check-list of North American Birds," prepared by a Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union. Third edition (revised). New York. 1910.]

THIS valuable work has reached Australia at an opportune moment. The Check-list Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union is already at work, and the members must profit by the study of this publication, which has stood the test of time.

It will interest Australians to note that trinomials are used to indicate sub-species. This is certainly a departure from the present Australian method of using a totally different name, which leaves the student without any indication that the bird under notice may not be a species, but a sub-species only.

One point that lessens the value of the A.O.U. Check-list, to Australian ornithologists, at least, is the omission of nearly all synonyms. Had the corresponding name in Sharpe's "Hand-list of Birds" been given as a synonym, the usefulness of the A.O.U. Check-list would have been increased to workers abroad. Few will recognize the Curlew-Stint under the name of *Erolia ferruginea*.

Though the Check-List forms a large volume of 420 pages, it contains no descriptions. The scientific name and authority, the vernacular name, the number of the species in the previous edition, a reference to the original description, and the range of each species, completes the information given in the List. Sub-species are similarly treated. Each is denoted by a letter.

The nomenclature conforms to the "Revised Code of Nomenclature" issued by the A.O.U. in July, 1908. Changes are "numerous," owing to the "strict application of the law of

priority" Though admittedly out of date, the old classification of birds adopted a "quarter of a century ago" is used, to avoid "annoyance."

In view of the vast difference in nomenclature, even in family names, one looks forward with interest to the publication of the Australian Check-list. While Sharpe, in his "Hand-list," uses the name *Colymbidæ* for the Divers and Loons of the Northern Hemisphere, the A.O.U. Check-list uses the name *Colymbidæ* for the Grebes and the name *Gaviidæ* for the Divers.* Again, the

* "British authors generally have used *Podiceps* for the Grebes, and just as consistently has it been rejected by American writers. The reasons given by the latter can be best understood by a quotation from a very recent paper on this subject. Allen (*Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, vol. xxiii., p. 289, 1907) stated:—'Certain naturalists, more especially the English, have, however, persistently employed *Colymbus* for the Loons and other names for the Grebes, clearly without good reason, possibly following Latham, who, in 1787, proposed *Podiceps* for the Grebes, and adopted *Colymbus* (Latham *nec* Linn.) for the Loons'; on p. 290 he added:—'Latham's "Genus lxxix. *Podiceps* (*Colymbus* Linn.)" is a substitute name for *Colymbus* Linnaeus, and consists of what was left of that group after the Loons were removed from it by Brisson. It is, therefore, an exact synonym of the restricted genus *Colymbus* Brisson of the Check-list. From the modern point of view, Latham had no right to re-introduce, on a later page, the name *Colymbus* (Genus lxxxvi. *Colymbus* Latham) as a new genus for the Loons, after making it a synonym of his own genus *Podiceps*, to say nothing of Brisson's having separated the Loons from the Grebes as a distinct genus in 1760, or twenty-seven years before. According to modern usage in other similar cases, *Podiceps* has no standing, being a pure synonym of an earlier genus.' Upon referring to Latham's work I find that the preceding is obviously a misinterpretation of Latham's action. In the Xth Ed. of the *Systema Naturæ* (p. 135) Linné included four species under his genus *Colymbus* (Brisson *independently* introduced *Colymbus* for the Grebes: he never subdivided a Linnean genus; he used the same names as Linné, often with different significations, as, for instance, *Mergus*, which he used for the Divers, though Linné had utilized it for the Mergansers). Linné, in his XIIth Edition of the *Systema Naturæ*, increased the number of species under *Colymbus* to eleven.

"Latham was the first writer to subdivide this genus, and his method was perfectly legitimate, and, moreover, quite intelligible. He noted fifteen species, but separated the Linnean genus into three, accepting *Uria* for the Guillemots, restricting *Colymbus* to the Divers, and introducing *Podiceps* for the Grebes. As he worked with the Linnean system, he indicated in brackets the Linnean genus in the few instances where he made improvements. This is clearly seen as, when including *Sylvia* (p. 287), *Perdix* (p. 290), *Numenius* (p. 291), and *Phalaropus* (p. 294), he noted against each the Linnean equivalents, *Motacilla*, *Tetrao*, *Scolopax*, and *Tringa* respectively. But such can by no means be called substitute names, as in each case Latham retained the Linnean names for a restricted portion of the Linnean genus. There can be no appeal whatever from Latham's action, and consequently *Podiceps* must be used for the Grebes. Latham's division was endorsed by such non-English ornithologists as Retzius (1800), Bechstein (1803), Meisner (1804), Koch (1816), Vieillot (1816), Cuvier (1817), Temminck (1820), Lesson (1828), and Kaup (1829), to mention only the first names that come to hand.

"In 1829 Kaup (*Skizz. Entw.-Gesch. Nat. Syst.*) introduced new generic names as follows:—On p. 35 he retained *Podiceps* for the *P. minor* group; on p. 41 he proposed *Dytes* for *P. cornutus* and *arcticus*; on p. 44 *Pedetaithya* for *P. subcristatus*; on p. 49 *Proctopus* for *P. auritus*; and p. 72, *Lophaithya* for *P. cristatus*. Here, again, though the names cannot be accepted with

Plotidæ of Sharpe's "Hand-list" is replaced by the *Anhingiðæ* of the A.O.U. Check-list.

The difficulty experienced by zoogeographers of drawing a dividing line between the Nearctic and Neotropical regions has been overcome by taking the political boundary between the United States and Mexico as the southern boundary of "North America." Lower California and adjacent islands are included in "North America."

The Australian Check-list Committee would do well to accept an extract given in the preface, namely:—"That every technical name be followed by a vernacular name selected with due regard to its desirability."

American ornithologists are fortunate in having so complete a record to assist them.

Correspondence.

NOMENCLATURE OF AUSTRALIAN AVIFAUNA.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—The chief criticism of my work, "The Birds of Australia," by my Australian friends has concerned the nomenclature I have adopted, and, as it seems to me that the principles which I follow are not clearly understood, I herewith explain myself.

The universal nomenclature of zoology is based upon the 10th edition of Linné's "Systema Naturæ," and the acceptance of all scientific names is governed by the International Code, formulated by the various International Congresses of zoologists. The scientific names I am using for Australian birds are those selected in pursuance of the laws of the International Code. By so doing I am choosing the name which has the best chance of being of permanent value, and, moreover, the one which will be easily recognized by every scientific worker, whether he be an Australian or not. For, by subscribing to the International Code, and only preferring the name which is correct according to the Code, I adopt that name which will be utilized by every other ornithologist throughout the world who also obeys the coded laws, whatever his nationality, and whether he knows of my choice or not. This point appears to have been overlooked by Australian ornithologists generally, as, with a conservatism which is antagonistic to progress, they have desired to use a name well known to themselves, though probably unknown to extra-Australian workers. To follow such a course in a work like mine would be fatal to its utility, and therefore could not be considered for a moment.

full generic rank, the method of restriction being correctly employed, no subsequent alterations can be admitted that would depreciate Kaup's division. Hence, *Podiceps* must be used for the Dabchicks and *Dytes* for the Grebes, the later introduced names being of only sub-generic value."

—Gregory M. Mathews, *Nov. Zool.*, vol. xvii.