

there be introduced. I have therefore decided to publish, at irregular intervals, such notes as I deem necessary to require immediate attention and referring to birds which either have been already treated of in my 'Birds of Australia' or will not be dealt with in the immediate future. In this place it is proposed to indicate new forms, notes on nomenclature, and any other interesting matter relating to the Australian avifauna."

Twenty-one pages out of the 24 pages of the initial part (vol. i., No. 1) contain a very interesting and critical paper, showing much research on the part of the editor—"Notes on Australian Cuckoos." From all the reasons and references set forth, Mr. Mathews has allotted to our hitherto 6 genera or 13 species, 5 genera (1 new), but has multiplied the species and sub-species to 23 (including 1 species and 8 sub-species new).

It is to be sincerely hoped that the advent of this new publication does not signal the withdrawal of all Mr. Mathews' serious Australian work from the pages of *The Emu*—a course to be regretted, especially as Mr. Mathews has received much support from Australian workers (to wit, from Capt. and Mrs. White, who are collecting, regardless of time, inconvenience, and expense, throughout the State of South Australia, and with special Government permission), and still expects and undoubtedly will receive continued support until the consummation of his self-imposed work.

Reviews.

["Home Life of the Osprey." By Clinton G. Abbott, B.A. Witherby and Co., London. Price 6s.]

THIS is the third volume of the Bird-Lover's Home Life Series, and is in every way worthy of its predecessors. The Osprey makes a fine subject for special study, and the photographs reproduced in this pleasant volume form a pictorial record of the domestic life of the great sea-bird. Some of the illustrations show Ospreys in flight, others depict the female alighting on the nest, the young birds, and nests in different situations, including the top of a telegraph pole and the posts of a sapling fence. All the photographs are excellently reproduced, and the plates are artistically mounted on stiff brown paper. The text accompanying this portfolio, although of minor importance, is full of interest, as the author relates his adventures on the coast of New Jersey, at the Great Lake, North Carolina, and at other places where he studied Ospreys. He describes how the wonderful photographs were obtained, and his observations on the habits of the birds are valuable. It was on Gardiner's Island that he found the best opportunities for studying the Osprey, which is protected by natural isolation as well as by the owners of the island.

["A Naturalist on Desert Islands." By Percy R. Lowe, B.A. Witherby and Co., London.]

FEW books of travel are more fascinating than those which describe the wanderings of naturalists. Darwin's "Voyage of the *Beagle*," Wallace's "Malay Archipelago," Bates's "Naturalist on the Amazon," and Sir Joseph Hooker's "Himalayan Journals," are the classics of this class of literature; but every year the library of natural history voyages and travels is increased. Few of the modern volumes can compare with the older ones, because they are so often written by men, or women, in a hurry; the old leisurely years have gone. Mr. Lowe's book, if it lacks distinction as a literary production, is delightful to read, for it deals with remote islands, where man has rarely been, and who can resist the romance of the little lands of the sea?

For six consecutive winters Mr. Lowe has accompanied Sir Frederic Johnstone and Lady Wilton, his wife, on yachting cruises in the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. On these voyages nearly every island in the two basins was visited, but the present volume is devoted to Swan Islands, Blanquilla Island, and the Hermanos Islands, all of which are sea-bird haunts. The Swan Islands are at the western end of the Caribbean Sea—"anchored like floating gardens on the placid surface of a sapphire sea"—and on the smaller of the two Frigate-Birds and Gannets nest in great numbers. The nests of the Frigate-Birds are built on the tops of the trees, whose branches are interlaced, making an arboreal platform. Occasionally a bird, when scrambling about the branches, loses its balance, and, in falling, becomes caught in a fork and is strangled. Mr. Lowe observed that the birds "live a good deal on floating animal refuse, which they pick up daintily off the surface."

The illustrations in "A Naturalist on Desert Islands" are interesting, but some of them have suffered in reproduction. The book is well printed and neatly bound—a desirable acquisition to the naturalist's library.

["Nest and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania." By Alfred J. North, C.M.Z.S., &c., Ornithologist to the Australian Museum.]

PART iii. of volume iii. of this work has been issued. It is a continuation of the Order Accipitres, and contains the sub-family *Accipitrinæ* (commenced on the last page of part ii.), the sub-family *Buteoninæ*, and the greater portion of the sub-family *Aquilinæ*. The figures of eggs, which are natural size, are reproduced by the heliotype process from photographs taken under the direction of the Government Printer and the supervision of Mr. A. E. Dyer. The illustrations of the birds are reproduced from drawings made by the late Mr. Neville Cayley, who also hand-coloured the plates of eggs in the coloured copies.

This part is particularly interesting, as it deals with a favourite group of birds, and is full of first-hand field-notes from the author's

correspondents in various parts of the Commonwealth. There are also some fine illustrations of "tall" climbing. Here, under the heading of Black-breasted Kite, formerly called Buzzard (*Gypoictinia melanosternum*), is a sample field-note, by Dr. Wm. Macgillivray, of Broken Hill, and a member of the R.A.O.U. :—

"During nearly nine years' residence, and a good deal of wandering through the scrubs and along the creeks of the district, I have only come across two pairs of these birds, and until 1909 had found only one nesting-place. My notes must necessarily deal mostly with one pair of birds. In 1907 Mr. M'Lennan and I, with some others, on our return journey from Langawirra, camped on Talcowinna Creek, about 35 miles from Broken Hill. Early next morning 9th September, we proceeded to investigate the nesting along the creek; cutting off a large bend to leave a portion near the camp, we struck the creek where a Cockatoo (*Cacatua sanguinea*) flying from a hole 40 feet up in a tall gum attracted our attention to a large nest in the same tree, on which a bird was seen to be sitting. It was a very windy morning, and the bird sat closely; sticks and stones were thrown up, but she did not move until a shot was fired in the air from the specimen gun, when a magnificent female of the Black-breasted Buzzard left the nest, but kept soaring round and round at a respectful distance. Seen from below she was a splendid bird, both from her proportions and colouring; her black breast and ruddy under surface, and the dark primaries contrasting with the conspicuous white band across their bases, easily distinguish her from all other birds of prey. The male, who soon joined her, is only about half her size, and not nearly so conspicuously marked; he has none of her rich colouring, no black breast, and pinions not so dark, his breast seen through the glass being fawn-coloured. When soaring, which they both do, like the Wedge-tailed Eagle, with the carpal joint fully extended and primaries all spread out and separate, the male appears in colouring like a brightly marked Little Eagle. The difference in size between male and female is, however, more marked even than in the Goshawks. When soaring round watching the climbers at work, the female kept uttering a series of short, sharp cries in quick succession, much resembling the alarm note of the Wedge-tailed Eagle. The nest was at a height of about 70 feet, placed in the fork of a rather thin horizontal limb. Seen from below it presented a loosely built and flat appearance. Sticks half to one inch in diameter were used in its construction; it was 2 feet by 3 feet across, with an egg cavity 9 inches in diameter, lined with green gum-leaves. The nest contained two fresh eggs. On the ground under the nest were the remains of rabbits. The Blood-stained Cockatoo's nest in the same tree contained three eggs."

Under the White Goshawk (*Aster nova-hollandiæ*), on the authority of Mr. Geo. Savage, Mr. North quotes an instance of that species inter-breeding with the Grey Goshawk (*A. clarus (cinereus)*), but offers no comments on the interesting occurrence. Although Mr. North quotes Mr. H. Greensill Barnard in several instances, he omits that collector's field observations of the apparently common occurrence of the inter-breeding of the White Goshawks and the Grey, at Cape York—*vide Emu*, vol. x., p. 247 (1910). The author of the Australian Museum's "Special Catalogue, No. 1," is to be commended for his consistency in two things—he never quotes where there is the faintest suspicion of doubtful authenticity, and he never quotes contemporary Australian authors. The latter, of course, keeps his work original, but at the risk of leaving students in the dark.

This important work must now be nearing completion, having been commenced over 10 years ago, and as the last decade has been rich in Australian ornithological discovery, perhaps Mr. Etheridge will recommend to the trustees of the Museum, which he represents, the necessity of publishing an appendix to this "Special Catalogue." Mr. North must possess much that is new and of interest concerning species already dealt with by him in previous parts, or species not mentioned at all.

Correspondence.

MUNGOOSES AND RATS.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—Mr. C. Coles is credited in *The Emu** with having said—"The mongoose released in Fiji had already mated with the rats there, and the hybrid destroyed birds." I have lived in Fiji for four years, and have seen great numbers of mongooses and rats, but have never seen or heard of a hybrid between the two.

Is it likely that two such dissimilar animals would mate when they are both living under natural conditions? One might as well expect a dog to mate with a cat, or a lion with a cow. Readers of Mr. Coles's statement might infer that the mongoose itself did not destroy birds. This animal was brought to Fiji to kill the rats, but has failed to do so. It is a great pest amongst poultry, destroying chickens and eggs, and no doubt does the same with the wild birds.

It would be interesting to know where Mr. Coles obtained information about the rat-mongoose hybrid.—I am, &c.,

Rarawai, Fiji, 14/2/12.

A. F. SMITH.

[Mr. Coles's statement appeared in a report of the proceedings at the R.A.O.U. Congress at Sydney. The editors are not responsible for any opinion thus expressed. It is, of course, not possible for the mongoose to breed with the rat—one belongs to the Order Carnivora and the other to the Order Rodentia.—EDS.]

South Australian Ornithological Association.

THE usual monthly meeting was held in the Royal Society's rooms, North-terrace, when Capt. S. A. White presided. The secretary (Mr. J. W. Mellor) read a report from the Police Department, stating it had been unsuccessful in detecting the persons who killed Flycatchers lately at the Reedbeds. Mr. Mellor tabled a specimen plate on a work being compiled in Europe by Mr. Dyseman on the classification of the world's ornithology. Capt. White read extracts from letters written by a lady of Yorke Peninsula. These letters were forwarded by Mrs. Bunday, and contained some interesting descriptions of bird-life on the Peninsula. The practice of destroying bird-life on the River Murray by holiday-makers while passing

* Vol. xi., p. 149.