

## State Secretaries' Reports

## QUEENSLAND.

*Merops ornatus*, the so-called Bee-eater, has again been the subject of an attack by the Queensland Bee-keepers' Association. A deputation from that body waited on the Brisbane and District Pests Board, and solicited support in requesting the Government to remove the bird from the protected list, and declare it a pest. Instances were given of cases in which, it was alleged, apiarists had to transfer their hives in order to have what bees the birds had left. The State Secretary of the R.A.O.U., who spoke at the invitation of the Mayor of Brisbane (chairman), presented evidence in the bird's favour, and suggested that the case was met by a clause in the new Animals and Birds Act that allowed owners of crops to destroy birds that were robbing them. The board reached a "half-way" decision on the question; they decided that as the bird was common and destructive it should not be protected, but that they could not advise that it be declared a pest. However, the Government with the advice of the chief entomologist, Mr. H. Tryon, R.A.O.U., settled the question by refusing both requests, and keeping the bird on the list of totally-protected species.

Subsequently (5th August) representatives of "Pest" Boards for the whole State discussed the case of *Merops*, and also those of the Crow (Raven ?) and English Starling. Again it was decided that the "Bee-eater" did not merit protection, but that it should not be proscribed. A motion to place a price on the head of the bird was withdrawn after the State Secretary had addressed the conference. Delegates also rejected a motion to increase the bonus on Crows, and carried a motion to remove the Starling from the list of "pests." In the course of discussion one councillor said he did not agree with the placing of a bonus on the head of any bird. The boards would be well advised, he thought, to confine their attention to flying foxes (fruit bats). Another delegate laid it down that the flying fox was the only creature listed as a pest that did not have some redeeming quality. In any case, he considered the whole work of the boards too suggestive of trying to bale the ocean with a bucket.

Sir William Beach Thomas, a distinguished British journalist and naturalist, was in Queensland recently. He was welcomed by officers of the R.A.O.U. in Brisbane, and in the Central district of the State he was hospitably entertained by the virile Rockhampton Native Bird Protection Association of Rockhampton, and by Mr. D. W. Gaukrodger, R.A.O.U., of Alice Downs, Blackall.

Mr. W. B. Alexander, M.A., C.F.A.O.U., who is now stationed in the Rockhampton district, has developed a latent talent for lecturing, and has done much good work of late in

speaking to public audiences and to school children about Rockhampton and Mount Morgan. Most of Mr. Alexander's lectures have been delivered under the auspices of the Central Queensland Bird Protection Association. Many of his slides are from the excellent photographs taken by Mr. Gaukrodger.

An agitation long carried on by Mr. E. J. Banfield ("The Beachcomber") of Dunk Island, has been taken up in Brisbane, with the result that the splendid Nutmeg (Torres Strait) Pigeon (*Myristicivora bicolor*) is to become totally protected for an indefinite period. The flights of this fine Pigeon have long been one of the features of the great coast of North Queensland, and it is not proposed to allow the bird to follow the Passenger Pigeon of America into extinction.

A. H. CHISHOLM,

State Secretary.

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