

difficulty from a clump of mistletoe, parasitic on a *Eucalyptus papuensis*. This nest was about 25 feet from the ground. A third nest, in a bauhinia tree, also concealed by mistletoe, was easily examined; it contained one egg. A fourth nest, with a very handsome heavily incubated egg, was in rather slender branches of a young native chestnut. Only twice did I see the female on the nest, and in each case she had her tail turned towards me, and failed to detect my presence. Evidently she steps off at the first sight of an intruder. With rude, fragile nests it is difficult to distinguish an old one from a new one, and others I found may have contained an egg but it was impossible to determine the point. All nests I found were within 200 yards of an occupied play-ground. When a nest had been robbed, no further attempt at breeding appeared to be made. The natives told me that at times they found two eggs in a nest, and on rare occasions as many as three. Eggs were found during January.

## The Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adelaidae*).

BY EDWIN ASHBY, F.L.S., M.B.O.U.

EARLY in May last I wrote the "Check List Committee" asking them to place the Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus adelaidae*) on the Check List, and not to treat it as a sub-species of *P. elegans*. I have consistently maintained this view in the past, and in a recent re-examination of a number of skins, my previous view has been fully confirmed. Messrs. A. J. and A. G. Campbell have prosecuted a similar investigation and state that they are of the same opinion.

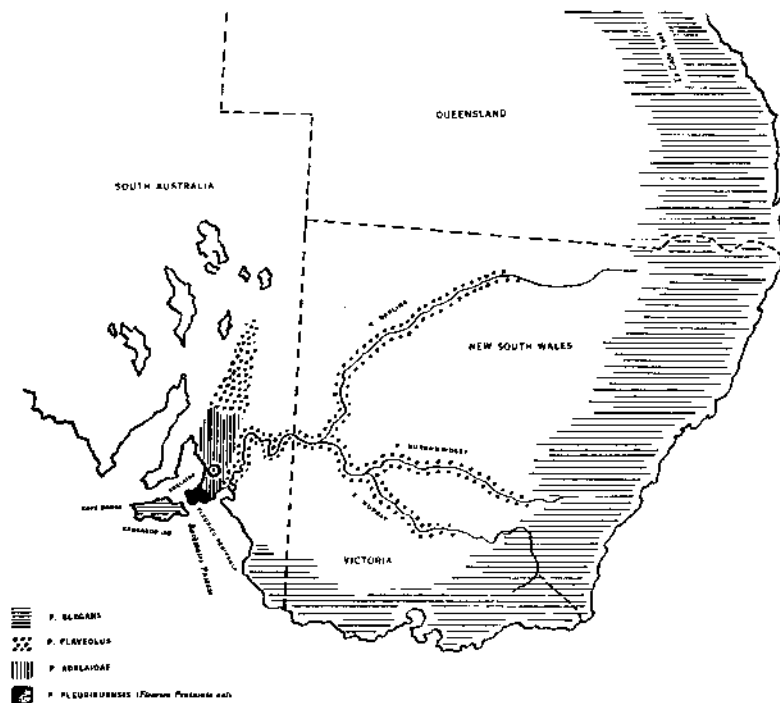
In my opinion to retain *P. flaveolus* and *P. elegans* and to merge *P. adelaidae* in the latter, is incorrect. To me only two courses are open:

- (a) To recognise the three as distinct species thus,
  1. *Platycercus flaveolus*, Gould, 1837.
  2. " *adelaidae*, Gould, 1840, with sub-species *fleurieuensis*, Ashby, 1917.
  3. " *elegans*, Gmelin, 1788.
- (b) To recognise
  1. *Platycercus flaveolus*, with sub-species *adelaidae* (form showing red in place of yellow and *fleurieuensis* (extremely red form)).
  2. *Platycercus elegans*.

While I believe that the second arrangement is probably the most correct, before accepting this, I should have preferred to have examined a much larger series of skins, commencing with the northernmost *flaveolus* and ending with the southernmost *adelaidae*—these to be collected at the same season of the year and following a geographical sequence. The result will show, I believe, a complete gradation from the highly coloured *fleurieuensis* in the south to the extreme pale yellow form in the north or drier districts.

This is not ignoring the fact that racial habitats can most likely be recognised, the margin of overlapping often being quite a narrow one.

The typical colour of *Platycercus elegans* is carmine (Ridgway's Colour Standards, pl. I.). From Cape York in North Queensland to Kangaroo Island, the extreme southern and western limit of its range, typical specimens of this colour occur. Northern specimens are a dwarf race but they exactly match Ridgway's plate of carmine; on the other hand many southern skins are a little brighter (less depth of tone) and I have seen skins from Victoria (and I think the south east of South Australia, though I have not one in my collection at the present time), which are an exceptionally brilliant carmine. These are still quite distinct in the character of the colour from the scarlet-red (Ridgway, Pl. I.) of the most brilliant race of *adelaidae*, viz., sub-species *fleurieuensis*, Ashby.



MAP ILLUSTRATING DISTRIBUTION OF CERTAIN SPECIES OF PLATYCERCUS

As I have before stated, the true carmine coloured *P. elegans*, range from North Queensland, through New South Wales and Victoria to the south-east of South Australia where they disappear on the mainland, but re-occur in Kangaroo Island. There they are the only representative of the genus *Platycercus* and extend to the western extremity of that island, Cape Borda.

Two hypotheses may be propounded to account for the existence of the brilliant scarlet-red form of *adelaidae* on the Fleurieu Pen-

insula: (1) That the yellow in the plumage of the northern (dry country) form known as *P. flaveolus*, owing to ecological or other influences, has been gradually transmuted into the scarlet-red of *fleurieuensis*, or . . . (2) That at some period partial hybridisation has occurred by some examples of *elegans* flying across Backstairs Passage, 11 miles in a direct line, and that the infusion of this blood has brought about the race known as *fleurieuensis*.

Whichever is the true cause, I think there can be no doubt that there is little or no justification for considering *adelaidae* to be conspecific with *elegans*. When we consider the great extent of the range of *elegans*, its adherence to type characters is most remarkable, for while melanotic mutations exist, apart from size differences, no very distinct races have been evolved.

## The Boobook Owl and Tawny Frogmouth.

BY DAVID H. FLEAY, R.A.O.U., Ballarat, Victoria.

(With Photographs by the Author.)

MUCH discussion is constantly going on concerning the originator of the nocturnal calls of "mopoke"—whether Owl or Frogmouth. I noticed in the *Emu* of July, 1925, an interesting paragraph on the New Zealand Spotted Boobook by Mr. R. H. D. Stidolph, R.A.O.U., of Masterton, N.Z., which has prompted me to put forward some notes which may be of interest.

For the past four years I have kept Boobook Owls (*Ninox boobook*) in captivity, and also, for a shorter period, a pair of Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*).

The Boobook Owls were taken at a very infantile stage and are remarkably tame. They greet me each night, just as Mr. Stidolph observes, with a rapid succession of "por-por-por-pors" uttered as many as twenty times. In fact, one frosty evening it was given by one bird in his staccato fashion more than fifty times.

From July onwards, especially in the spring of the year, Boobook Owls redouble their nocturnal calls. When I enter the cage at night during these months they greet me with the peculiar sharp cry of "Ow, ow, ow!" or "whow, whow!" or "who, who!" just as it strikes the listener's fancy. Generally this cry begins with the "who" and gradually merges into and ends in the well-defined "ow!" This cry, however, is mainly given by the large female birds; the male birds and one particularly—as he does it from my shoulder—give vent to the familiar "mopoke! mopoke!" which is so often heard at night. Sometimes on calm nights there is a regular chorus from my birds, for both male and female birds are capable of the "mopoke" call, and no two birds utter it in quite the same key. One bird particularly growls the notes, being quite a humorous contrast to