

Rainbow-bird or Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). It is most aptly named, for it really is an animated rainbow. Unfortunately, we were not able to see clearly one bird in the flock of thirty or so which had the two spine or racket feathers in the tail.

During our stay on the plains, we encountered rather bad weather. Rain and heavy fog hampered us, otherwise it is probable that our list would have been considerably increased, both as regards numbers of individuals and number of species. The more common birds, such as the Blue Wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*), Yellow-tailed and Brown Thornbills (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* and *A. pusilla*), Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*), Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), and Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), were as abundant at this altitude as they were about Melbourne.

Fauna and Flora Reserves in Western Australia

By EDWIN ASHBY, F.L.S., C.F.A.O.U., Ex-President R.A.O.U., "Wittunga," Blackwood, South Australia.

The enclosed copy of a letter* recently received from the Under Secretary for Lands in Western Australia will interest every reader of *The Emu*.

To make this letter intelligible to readers, I will explain that during my visit of two months' duration to that State in September and October last it was my privilege to advocate the setting apart of numerous reserves in all possible districts, whenever I had the opportunity to do so.

In Perth, during the holding of the Congress, I twice addressed the Government Training College for Teachers at Claremont, the splendid Modern School at Subiaco, the official civic reception, the official opening by the Minister of the Crown, of Congress, and the Wild Flower Show, under the

(Copy.)

*GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEYS.

Mr. Edwin Ashby, Perth, 20th April, 1928.
"Wittunga," Blackwood,
South Australia.

Dear Sir,—

In reply to your letter of the 3rd January to the Hon. Mr. McCallum (Minister for Works), on the subject of the setting apart of Fauna and Flora Reserves in this State within a few miles of every township, I am directed by the Hon. the Minister for Lands, to whom the matter has been referred for consideration, to inform you that this Department will, as opportunity offers, create additional reserves for the protection of native flora as advocated by you, and will also continue the present policy of non-interference with existing reserves set apart for the same purpose.

Your correspondence on the subject is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) C. G. MORRIS,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

Auspices of the Western Australian Field Naturalists' Society, of which function I was the official opener. At all these gatherings, as well as personally to two members of the Ministry, was this question of reserves urgently pressed.

On returning to South Australia the interest and sympathy of Dr. Arthur W. Hill, Director of Kew, England, was enlisted, and he furnished me with a supporting letter dated 23/12/27, of which the following is an extract:—"I fully agree with all you say . . . as to the renewal of "Top-feed": unless stock is excluded from such areas until regeneration by seedlings can take place, the areas will be reduced to desert conditions. Sir Thomas Hanbury, at La Mortola, Italy, was concerned at the absence of young trees on the Italian hills, where goats ran loose, and he fenced in an area, excluding all animals, with the result that seedlings eaten off, grew up, and fresh seedlings germinated, and now a dense forest is the result, no other action having been taken." "The Sand-plain flora in Western Australia is wonderful, and, as you know, unique, and areas should most certainly be reserved near any township. Everything possible should be done to prevent its destruction, especially as the land is not well suited for other purposes. It is a national heritage of which Australia should take the utmost care."

The following are extracts from my letter to the Hon. Mr. McCallum (Minister for Works) under date of 3rd January last:—

"I had the pleasure of meeting you on 21st October last; I then spoke to you about my concern that your Government should take up the matter of setting apart fauna and floral reserves within a few miles of every township, where your wonderful Sand-plain flora is within easy reach. Your native Sand-plain flora is unique; no other State in Australia, nor any other country, has such a unique flora, whose flowers, both in form and delicacy of colouring, are beyond compare. I would also most strongly advise that in your pastoral leases in the north-west of your State (I speak from personal observation only of the area between the Gascoyne and the Murchison), some clause should be inserted making it incumbent upon the holder of the lease to keep the stock out of certain portions of the leased area for a definite period of time in rotation, to enable the "Top-feed" to be renewed by the growth of seedlings." . . . I would, in conclusion, point out that both the matters urged herein are urgent. The adoption of the suggestions would cost the Government nothing. The rapid growth of farming settlement makes it desirable that all suitable fauna and flora reserves be made without delay. Once secure, they can be dealt with later. Possibly later some legislation kindred to the Wild Flowers Act of New South Wales might be passed."