

The migrating species, as against the nomadic, have not been discussed, but, broadly speaking, the young birds move first, and the parents as a rearguard; and one can assume with the hazards of wind and dark, cloud and fog, that the families lose touch with each other, and intermingle till in-breeding is difficult.

The writer in occasional papers in *The Emu* has now and again suggested avenues of exploration in bird-study. He wonders if anyone has had the interest or leisure to follow such ideas.

Having concluded this paper with the last sentence, the writer went out by car to one of the swamps, and there, to refute one of his statements, was a flock of 21 Straw-necked Ibises, the first seen for 18 months. Whether they remain must be left to future observation to determine. They have already moved on.

The Validity of the Generic Name *Æstrelata*.

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Among the changes in generic names introduced by Mr. G. M. Mathews for Australian birds was *Pterodroma* in place of *Æstrelata*. The latter name had been in general use for upwards of 50 years for a large number of species of world-wide distribution. It had, therefore, become firmly established in ornithological literature, so that its suppression in favour of one that had never come into general use caused a good deal of confusion and annoyance. Had the change been made in accordance with the principles or laws of zoological nomenclature it must have been accepted. The evidence given by Mathews for the change, however, proves that *Æstrelata* was legally retained by Coues when uniting some of Bonaparte's genera.

The history of the case as outlined by Mathews (*Birds of Australia*, Vol. 2, p. 131, 1912) is as follows:—Bonaparte in *Comptes Rendus*, Vol. 42, p. 768, 1856, introduced both *Pterodroma* and *Æstrelata*, *Pterodroma* appearing first on the page. In the following volume (*Comptes Rendus*, Vol. 43, p. 994, 1856) he introduced *Cookilaria* in place of *Rhantistes*, which was preoccupied.

Coues (*Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci.*, Philadelphia, 1864-66) united these three genera and selected *Æstrelata* because it appeared first in the *Conspectus Genera Avium* of Bonaparte, which Coues thought was issued prior to *Compt. Rend.*, Vol. 42; in reality it did not appear until 1857.

Mathews, pointing out that *Pterodroma* stands first on the page in the publication in which it first appeared, and quoting the principle on which Coues worked, substituted on the same principle *Pterodroma* in place of *Æstrelata*. As it stands, his argument is plausible, and it has been generally accepted. It is, however, futile and contrary to both the principles and rules of the Zoological Code. Had Mathews quoted Article 28 he would have had no case, and the desired change in name could not have taken place. It matters not on what principle Coues selected *Æstrelata*, for the rule does not mention the manner of selection but merely the fact. Article 28 reads as follows:—"A genus formed by the union of two or more genera or subgenera takes the oldest valid generic name of its components. If the names are of the same date, that selected by the first reviser shall stand." Clearly Coues selected *Æstrelata* in accordance with this rule, and his revision, being the first, must stand. Recommendation C to Article 28, which contains the principle on which both Coues and Mathews worked, applies only in the absence of any previous revision. A precedent may be quoted for the construction of Article 28 in favour of the establishment of *Æstrelata* in preference to *Pterodroma* in opinion 40 of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, which opinion, however, deals with species, not genera.

So-called Bird Pests

By ARTHUR C. V. BLIGH, R.A.O.U., Brookstead,
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I was interested in the observations concerning Starlings in *The Emu* of April last, and in Mr. H. Piggott's letter. I agree that the habits not only of Starlings, but of many other birds that are considered as pests should be more thoroughly investigated before their classification under the heading of pests.

As a member of a board which exists for the control of pests in Queensland, I cannot help emphasising the opinion that too little is known in connection with many of these designated pests, for which a bonus for destruction is often paid. Their uses often outweigh their abuses. Locality often alters this aspect, through industries being different, etc. We are, as a board, continually having to change our verdicts against these supposed pests, until I personally am convinced that practically all the so-called pests whose destruction is paid for, have a balance, which invariably gives a credit against the debit. In fact, I am left with one exception only, and that is the flying fox, or large fruit-eating bat. It may have good qualities, but I am not aware of them. The Starling is undoubtedly a curse in