

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

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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

some districts, more especially where fruit and wheat are grown, but it must be admitted that it is a destroyer of insect life in many forms. In New Zealand, the Grass Beetle threatened the planted grasses, more especially Rye Grass, but the Starling beat the Beetle. I have seen Starlings clean up grasshoppers in the hopper stage, and I have seen them take ticks from cattle and sheep in the tick areas of Queensland. It must be admitted that their natural diet is insect life, but unfortunately they like fruit and grain, in which most of our birds seem to join them.

I am not arguing for the Starling to be preserved in any way—its faults may far outweigh its virtues—but we know so little of the life habits of these birds under different locality conditions that it seems that exhaustive enquiries should be made before we enter them in the lists for destruction, especially with a reward for their scalps. They certainly should be destroyed in the fruit areas. But what about the cattle tick areas? It has been our experience as a board, when enquiring as to the advisability of rewarding destruction of different supposed pests to be given very strong arguments for and against them, leaving us very undecided generally. For instance, a few years back we paid one shilling per head for crows. We instituted enquiries as to this bird pest, and practically stopped paying for them, on the evidence received. Some authorities, notably Mr. White, of Belltrees, Scone, could not condemn this bird sufficiently; in fact, to look for a good quality was a sin. While, from the sugar plantations, however, the report was nothing but good. There its destruction (owing to the work it does with the cane grub) would undoubtedly be a sin. Anyway, the crow won out, and seeing it has been with us since the days of Captain Cook (and I do not think it has increased greatly), one must admit perhaps this was right.

Personally, I think the suggestion in *The Emu* referred to as to the making of very exhaustive enquiries into the life and food of these birds would be an immense advantage to our country.

Albinism in Birds.—A very interesting case of albinism came under my notice in July. Among a flock of the small Yellow-tailed Thornbills (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) feeding in a grass paddock, was one which was almost pure white in plumage. The head and mantle had a slightly darker shade, but the wings, under side of body and tail were white, giving the bird a very curious appearance amid its darker mates. The upper tail coverts, which are bright yellow in the usual plumage, were a pale whitish-yellow in this individual. In over 30 years' experience with our native birds, this is the first instance of albinism I have met with in the Thornbills of the genus *Acanthiza*.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S.—*Mercury*, Hobart, 19/7/28.