

it should be possible to learn much about the food, habits and nidification of Australian species, particularly the parrot and finch tribes. In Europe almost without exception all our species have been kept and bred in aviaries, and some of these are thought to be extinct in Australia. The aviculturist would be in a position, when the time came, to stock sanctuaries and preserves. The Japanese have made some wonderful changes in the Shell Parrot or Budgerygah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), and blue instead of green is the predominant colour in some strains. Some criticism was levelled at the restrictions placed by the Minister of Customs on import of all and sundry live birds. For many years* persistent efforts were made to establish many species which were brought here in large quantities before even the Sparrow and Starling became acclimatised. The only species in the last 60 years to go wild is the Bulbul, and probably that was knowingly liberated by certain Indian visitors. Yet no bird at all is allowed in now, neither kinds where only the male is kept because of its colour, nor species which have been aviary-bred for generations and are now incapable of living in the wild state.—
A. G. CAMPBELL.

*See *Emu*, Vol. 5, p. 110.

Stray Feathers

Pied Currawongs.—For a week or more a party of Pied Currawongs (*Strepera graculina*), about seventy in number, has been in the hills near Montrose, Victoria. Each morning after sunrise the birds' rowdy calls attract attention, and if the morning be calm they can be heard over a mile away. The party then proceeds to trek through the forests and clearings in search of breakfast. They feed largely upon the ground, turning over sticks and bark in search of insect food, which must be required in considerable quantity for such a lusty party. Being partial to fruit they greedily devoured and even carried away some put out in a paddock for them. The Currawong's flight is not quick and vigorous like that of their relative the Magpie (*Gymnorhina*), but easy and leisurely. Collecting occasionally in the top of some prominent tree, they delight in a morning frolic, each bird calling and chattering its loudest. Some cries sound like "crick, crick, beware," "two and two are four," "get more work," while others answer "where," "wheew," "whee." The whole performance is a rare exhibition of bird "jazz" music. From a row of pine trees one morning they descended and ascended with

graceful planing, and pirouetting their fully expanded tails. With their dusky and white plumage and agile movements they reminded one of the perpetual motion of the Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*). Later in the day the Currawongs are almost silent and appear to make their way back to their sleeping quarters in the hills, to repeat much the same programme again next day. These birds were in this district during the autumn of 1925. Old residents state they have occasional recollections of them in the past. This autumnal nomadic habit is probably the manner in which the species finds suitable haunts in new districts and so increases the area of its habitat. It is undoubtedly a newer form of *Strepera* than *S. versicolor*, whose haunts it invades and overlaps. Coming right down the coastal belts from Cape York to Wilson's Promontory, it then turns westwards and is found in the Baw Baw Ranges, in the Otway Forest, the Pyrenees, and in the Grampians. In the last-named mountains it is a very common bird indeed. But this is its furthest west, because the flat sparsely timbered country beyond appears to impose a barrier to further extension. It is quite possible, however, that some fine autumn, under the influence of a good season or some other more local circumstance, a party of Pied Currawongs may make the journey across to South Australia.—A. G. CAMPBELL, J.P., Kilsyth, Vic.

Reviews

[The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Vol. II.: The Birds of the Hill Stations. By H. C. Robinson, late Director of Museums, Fed. Malay States. (Witherby, London.) 35/-.]

This volume is devoted to the birds known to inhabit or visit the mountain region, which lies more or less in the central portion of the peninsula. For this purpose 2500 feet above sea level is taken as the line which excludes typical lowland birds. Above this are found strictly montane species, including all races of birds that are peculiar to the Malay Peninsula, these, however, being allied to birds inhabiting similar altitudes in Sumatra and Borneo.

This arrangement is novel but of considerable ecological value as indicating what may be the older types of bird life. Such families as Frogmouths, Hoopoes, Starlings and Grackles are absent, while Hornbills, Barbets, Woodpeckers, Bulbuls and other birds which do not cross to the east of the Wallace line are well represented. Besides, there are families like Bee-eaters, Pittas, Drongos, White-eyes, Flower-peckers and Sunbirds, which are known in the Australasian region by a few representatives only.