

"seen feeding on the cones of the She-oaks (*Casuarina*), which they bite into and drop before they are half finished."

Further observations on the habits of this unique and interesting parrot may be commended to the ornithologists resident in south-western Australia.

Australian Ground Thrush. — The Australian Ground Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*), though slightly larger, bears a close resemblance in appearance to the English Song Thrush, but its nests and eggs are very similar to those of the English Blackbird. All three species are classed together under the same family group. The Ground Thrush is still common in the damp gullies through many parts of Gippsland. In former years it was one of the commonest birds in the tea-tree belts along the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay, but it has since been compelled to forsake many of its favourite haunts through the extension of settlement.—D. J. DICKISON, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.

Reviews

[A Handbook of the Birds of West Africa. By George Latimer Bates, M.B.O.U. (John Bale, Sons & Danielson Ltd., Publisher, Oxford House, London.) Price, 30/-.]

This book is a record of 30 years of diligent observation by the author amongst the birds of the West African region bounded by the parallel of 20° north and 2° south and the meridian of 14° east. One of the two accompanying maps illustrates the extent of the territory covered and comprises that portion of the African continent between Senegal and Gambia on the west and French Cameroen on the east, whilst extending northwards across the southern part of the Sudan and the French Territory of the Niger. The other map shows the types of country, and there is a chapter dealing with the physical features with notes on the predominant birds in particular areas.

A feature of the book is the bringing together as near as possible of groups thought to be related. There are short notes on the various orders and keys to the genera preceding the subdivision into species. To aid the student of ornithology the book is prefaced by a guide to the method adopted in the measurement of birds as well as an explanation of the terms used.

The publication is an admirable addition to the meagre records of the birds of that area and the author's original field notes and the scientific nomenclature make the work an essential for use by the systematist as well as for the



Australian Ground Thrush at nest.

Photo. by D. J. Dickison, R.A.O.U.

field-worker when studying the birds of that region. There are a number of illustrations by H. Grönvold.

Two birds, which among others interest Australians, are the Black Bee-eater (*Melittophagus gularis australis*) and the Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*).—A.H.M.

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[List of the Vertebrated Animals exhibited in the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London, 1828-1927. Centenary Edition in three volumes. Vol. II., Birds. By G. Carmichael Low, M.A., F.Z.S., etc. Price, 25/-]

The compilation of a volume of this nature must have been a colossal task, and Dr. Low has certainly produced a work that should be a monument to the labour and care expended on it. The book contains a reference to 2330 species—and these it must be remembered are from all corners of the earth. It is entitled a "list," but it is much more than a mere list. Of each of the species contained there is the scientific and vernacular names, an account of the habitat, a reference to where the bird is figured, and often additional information such as a list of synonyms, and notes on differences between the bird in question and allied forms.

A large number of Australian birds are included, although frequently the reference to a bird's habitat does not extend to Australia some widely-spread forms occurring here. Occasionally, too, the habitat of birds found practically throughout the Commonwealth is confined to some particular area. An example of the former is the Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) which is described as a bird breeding in the Palæarctic Region and visiting Southern Asia and Africa in winter, and of the latter the "Laughing Kingfisher" (*Dacelo gigas*) described simply as of "New South Wales." *Fulica australis* (the Australian Coot) is retained as a separate species distinct from *F. atra* with which our Checklist identifies it.

A work in itself is the splendid index of 160 pages which is appended. It appears to have been prepared with the same care and exactitude as is characteristic of the volume generally.—C.E.B.

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[*Systema Avium Æthiopicarum*.—A Systematic List of the Birds of the Ethiopian Region. By W. L. Sclater, M.A., M.B.O.U. Part II. (Published by the British Ornithologists' Union.) Price, 21/-]

This volume completes the list of birds of the Ethiopian Zoogeographical region, which comprises the continent of Africa, portion of Arabia south of the Tropic of Cancer, and all the islands as far away as Tristan da Cunha and

Kerguelen. Together with Part I., published 1924 (see *The Emu*, Vol. XXIV., p. 157) the list consists of 833 pages. Synonyms are not included and species are not numbered, but there are 4439 names of sub-species and species not divided into sub-species. Much care has been taken to define the sub-species considered valid, and to give them all English vernacular names—a difficult task—but locality names are freely used, such as East Coast Olive Greenbul, Kenya Rufous Sparrow and Somali White-bellied Swift. Distribution of each is given in full, and useful notes explain alterations in scientific names. In the appendix, the inclusion of species and sub-species additional to Part I., is covered by a note to each. The B.O.U. by an appeal among members raised £300 toward the printing of Part II.

The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (Berne, 1904) has been followed as strictly as possible. "In a few cases there is a certain ambiguity about the application of these rules and there are still many questions that must remain in doubt." This is informative to Australians in the light of the fact that some writers consider the rules inviolate, and accordingly play havoc with existing custom without rhyme or reason. That this ambiguity is acknowledged, not so much in the rules as in their application, would tend to show that certain things are claimed for the rules that are not claimed by the framers. For instance, while the International Code can justly be said to be a consolidation of the methods hitherto in use and a rule of conduct for the future, it does not claim to be retrospective, nor can anyone who makes this claim show how such a thing is practicable. At the same time opinion 67 shows the way out of much difficulty and controversy in "fixing," by common consent, the name for a species, where the original is lost in oblivion or undeterminable.

The day is not yet in sight when complete unanimity will be reached in nomenclature, but after all what does this matter, since nomenclature is not a science but a system of labelling.—A.G.C.

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[Australian Discovery, Vol. 2.—By Land. By Ernest Scott, Professor of History, Melb. Univ. (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.) Price, 10/6 net.]

"I had seen the *Psittacus Novæ-Hollandiæ* and the shell parrot following the shore-line of St. Vincent's Gulf like flights of starling in England. . . . Now, although the casual appearance of a few strange birds should not influence the judgment, yet from the regular migration of the feathered race a reasonable inference may be drawn." Thus Charles Sturt, a shrewd observer, arguing his theory

as to the existence of good pasture land in the centre of Australia, and basing it on the migration of certain species of birds. Sturt's journals contain many references to birds observed by him—the 'Diamond birds (*Amandina*) [which] were bold enough to perch on his spade,' the bird-life at his 'Depot' on the trip to Central Australia where 'the parrots and paroquets flew up and down the creeks collecting their scattered thousands,' where 'pigeons congregated together; bitterns, cockatoos, and other birds; all collected round as preparatory to migrating'; and his description of the birds near the Murray mouth, and in the vicinity of the Coorong, where the last Camp-out of the Union was held.

It is refreshing to have this aspect of the exploration of our Continent brought to our notice. To read the pioneers' own descriptions, as we are enabled to do through the medium of this volume, is to appreciate their journeys from a more direct point of view than is possible from a perusal of 'written-up' accounts. With Vol. 2 Professor Scott completes the task ably begun with his collection of narratives of maritime exploration and places at the disposal of the reader a fairly complete record of the principal exploring expeditions in this country.

To discriminate is probably odious, but special recognition of the faithfulness of the aboriginal Wylie, the companion of Eyre in his tragic journey around the Bight, seems required. Apart from that it is a case of all honour to those who, as Prof. Scott says, 'prepared the way for the pastoralist, the miner and the farmer.' Let us also add 'the ornithologist.'—C.E.B.

News and Notes

It is indeed gratifying to have so much matter forwarded by members for *The Emu*, nevertheless the selection of articles is a task requiring judicious handling, as it often causes other contributions to be held over. Thus the article on Wilson's Promontory (Bryant) was accepted by the late Dr. Leach in January, 1929, whilst that on the birds of Wyperfield Park (Hanks), although read at Congress, was submitted about May last. Both these have been continually held over since. In future contributions will be published strictly according to the date of receipt. Articles containing descriptions of new species and contributions of special interest will, of course, receive the priority they require.

Will authors receiving proofs for correction kindly return them, when corrected, to the Editor, not to the printer.