

philanthropy of James Smithson, who gave to the American Government a fund equal in purchasing power to £300,000. "This far-seeing well-wisher of his kindred," says Dr. Casey Wood, "did not limit or burden his gift, but had in mind any activity that would *anywhere* increase and spread useful knowledge." Smithson desired the foundation of an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.

The Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club (No. CCCXXXVI.) contains an account of an "Exhibition of lantern-slides of Australian Birds and their Nests," by E. F. Pollock, R.A.O.U., N.S.W., whilst in London last year (1929). The lecturer appears to have supplemented what are described as his own "excellent photographs" with Emu studies by Dr. W. Macgillivray, R.A.O.U., and with photographs by Otho Webb, R.A.O.U. Mr. N. B. Kinnear, in charge of the bird section of the National History Museum, South Kensington, who was responsible for the report in the Bulletin, indicates that the photos. of sea-birds, including Gannets (*Sula*), Terns (*Sterna*), Albatrosses and others, were an outstanding feature of Mr. Pollock's exhibit. Mr. G. M. Mathews seconded the vote of thanks moved by the chairman, Major S. S. Flower.

Report of Bird Observers' Club

With the new year, attendance of members and friends has much improved, and quite an interesting as well as educational series of meetings has to be recorded. Under the guidance of the new president, Mr. H. V. Miller, and the secretary, Mr. H. E. D. Stevens, interest should be maintained. Mr. W. H. Ingram is now on the committee. At the annual meeting votes of thanks were passed to the retiring president and secretary, Messrs. A. G. Campbell and N. J. Favalaro, after which a novel demonstration of bird skinning was given by Mr. J. A. Ross. So much interest was aroused by this that a request has been made to repeat it. A very fine lecture was given at the April meeting by Mr. C. E. Bryant, who, with a wonderful series of pictures, took the members over a three weeks' walking tour in the unknown and unmapped alpine regions of Victoria lying between Mansfield and Heyfield.

In March, by the invitation of Dr. Norman McArthur, the Club visited his model farm at Upper Beaconsfield, an outing thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

The April outing was to the Dee River, near Warburton, on one of the last warm days of autumn. Birds were not so much in evidence as in summer. A lone Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*) was observed, probably having failed to join in the annual migration northwards. On the track the party were held for some minutes spellbound by the delightful song of a Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*). At the ordinary meeting in May (the meetings being held on the fourth Tuesday in each month) Mr. M. Sharland entertained the Club with "Tasmanian Birds," illustrated by a happy series of slides of their domestic economy. On May 4, 1930, the

hill at Ringwood was visited, always one of the landmarks with its tall column of pines. The outlook over the metropolis in one direction and the distant hills in the other was superb. Lunch was enjoyed in a newly-erected shelter shed, and the return walk to Mitcham was made through the valley of the Deep Creek, which remains much in a state of nature. A native wallaby and a Grey Currawong (*Strepera versicolor*) were seen within sound of the suburban electric train service.

An outing on the plains to the west of Melbourne occupied June 1, 1930. A 22-mile drive reached the Werribee River at Exford, where there is a large dam for the service of soldier settlement lower down the stream. The day was boisterous and the rapid approach of winter not at all favourable for bird observing, nevertheless members found great interest in the geography of the country and the wide panoramas to be obtained. On the maps all this is shown as newer basalt. Where the river cuts out its deep channel through the plain, evidence of more than one lava flow is to be seen, separated by large beds of sand and gravel. On every hand there are abundant signs of intense heat and earlier movement, while the flat-topped hills around bear witness to the dying volcanic activity. It was easy to picture the effect upon bird life, when this barrier which separated, maybe for centuries, the country beyond from the country in the vicinity of Melbourne was laid down. Even nowadays, when it is obvious that the timber is gradually creeping back on the western edge of the plain, the quota of bird life hereabouts contains several species, notably Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*), Brown Treecreeper (*Micræa fascians*), Whiteface (*Apheloccephala leucopsis*), Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*), Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus hæmatonotus*), Black-chinned Honeyeater (*Melithreptus gularis*), and Fuscous Honeyeater (*Meliphaga fusca*), which seldom, if ever, are recorded any nearer to the city.

Standing on the summit of Mt. Cotterell, a dead volcanic cone, 300 feet above the surrounding plain, a perfect cyclorama of landscape was obtained. It seemed possible to mark with a stick the limit of the grey-box forest and the struggling red gums. The wide open spaces, the rust-red soil bursting into a carpet of green, the stony rises and the altogether different feel of the country were a fascinating object lesson in ecology.

Historical associations are here also. It was from Mt. Cotterell that John Batman in June, 1835, surveyed the promised land, which was bartered by the blacks. Among the many evidences of the work of early pioneers is the remnant of the old stone home by the River of James Pinkerton, who came there with his family in the early forties, attracted by the land settlement scheme of Batman's Port Phillip Association. He was the grandfather of the late A. J. Campbell, who used to say he got his first lessons in natural history about these plains.

The Bird Observers' Club has been especially fortunate this quarter in being favoured with two extra lectures of more than usual interest. Following the return of the "Discovery," Mr. R. A. Falla, ornithologist of the expedition, entertained members on April 9 with a delightful account of New Zealand bird life, illustrated with lantern slides and musical renderings of birds' songs. On May 13, by special arrangement, Mr. C. L. Lang, of Ararat, gave "The Grampians with a Camera." Mr. Lang's skill in photography, the many and tastefully coloured slides, and the fascinating manner in which he presented his subject, will long be remembered as a real treat by all who ventured out on an inclement evening.

The visits to the bird room of the National Museum have been continued by invitation of the Director, Mr. J. A. Kershaw, two being devoted to a minute and detailed examination of the Honeyeater tribe, and a third to Magpies and Bell Magpies. Two other

afternoons have also been booked, viz., July 19 and August 4. A pressing invitation is hereby given to members of the R.A.O.U. and the Club, together with any friends who are at all interested in bird study, to come to these practical object lessons.

Nature Study Camps

Bird lovers generally—and R.A.O.U. members in particular—are invited to participate in the camp-outs to take place at Port Stephens, north of Newcastle, N.S.W., next December and January, which are being organised by Mr. E. F. Pollock, R.A.O.U., F.R.G.S., of Carrington Avenue, Strathfield, from whom an illustrated pamphlet setting out all particulars can be obtained. Two camps, each of three weeks' duration, will be held, one immediately before and the other directly after Christmas. Mr. Pollock recently spent a week in the district searching for an attractive camp site, and an ideal position has been selected from which daily excursions by water will be made on a large specially chartered boat. The islands visited by R.A.O.U. members in November, 1928 (particulars of which were recorded in the April, 1929, *Emu*), will be revisited, as well as many other attractive places in the district. A feature of the camps will be a series of lantern lectures by ornithologists and other naturalists twice weekly, for which a hall (distant 15 minutes by boat from the camp) has been engaged.

The breeding habits of the following birds, amongst others, will receive particular attention:—Little Penguins, White-winged Petrels, White-faced Storm-Petrels, Silver Gulls, Nankeen Night Herons, and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters or Mutton Birds. The locality is exceptionally prolific in both sea birds and land birds. Each day will be marked by hours of worth-while and enjoyable outings, visiting quaint and beautiful out-of-the-way places on sea, harbour, river and lakes.

Report of Meetings of R.A.O.U. Council

At the meeting of the Council held on April 8 Mr. Mattingley occupied the chair, and took the opportunity of welcoming Mr. R. A. Falla, R.A.O.U., who had that day returned on the "Discovery" from the Antarctic. At the request of the Avicultural Society of Victoria, Messrs. Campbell, Hanks and Dickison were appointed to discuss with that society the restrictions on the importation of birds into Australia. Mr. Ross was appointed a trustee, *vice* the late Dr. Leach, in connection with the bond for £1000, the gift of the late Mr. H. L. White, held by the Union.