

## Report of Bird Observers' Club

An interesting run on December 7, 1930, was made to Palm Beach, on Western Port Bay. The natural features include a remarkable land-locked lagoon and an excellent ocean sand beach. An area of tea-tree and banksia scrub has been reserved as a sanctuary for native birds and animals. When the tide retreated from the bay at Hastings thousands of swans and wading birds collected on the mangrove mud banks to feed.

At the first meeting in the New Year an invitation was given to the public. Rev. C. L. Lang, of Ararat, described a tour of the Grampians, in which was made a complete circuit of these natural wonderlands. The lecture was illustrated with a unique series of coloured lantern slides. In proposing a vote of thanks, the speakers said Mr. Lang was doing a national service in bringing before the public the beauties of the area. One did not need to be a geologist to be impressed with the wonderful rock scenery, nor a botanist to admire the beauty of its flowers; and one did not require to be a naturalist to understand the happy photographs of living birds, nor an artist to give a full measure of admiration to Mr. Lang's pictures.

The outing on February 1 was to Queenscliff by steamer. Sea birds following the vessel provided interest. Silver Gulls followed for a mile or two until Arctic Skuas became plentiful, when after several scuffles the Gulls retired. Skuas escorted the steamer right across the Bay. On nearing the southern port, however, Silver Gulls again took their place. A solitary White-capped Albatross was noted sailing and banking with superb ease, while Mud Island, where the little Stormy Petrels are nesting, made a fitting background. Returning in the evening, the waters of the Bay formed a radiant path between the bright grass brown landscape of the plains on one hand, and the storm-laden clouds gathering about the high lands on the other.

A visit to Black Rock on Saturday afternoon, February 21, will long be remembered. A party of Crested Terns, about 150 in number, was found perched upon a rocky ledge left bare by the tide, their white plumage set off by black cap and orange bill. We approached within 30 feet of them and heard their continuous unmusical calling, with higher pitched squeaking from immature birds, several of which could be discerned with mottled back and black bill. A pretty domestic scene occurred when a parent appeared carrying a small sprat, and fed one of these lusty youngsters. On taking flight the party presented a wonderful picture as they moved with gyrating wings to another rock.

Effective use is made at Black Rock of the natural coastal tea-tree for shelter and also in garden design, giving a distinctive local beauty, besides providing sanctuary for the remaining bird inhabitants. A ramble inland over sandy lanes cut through the tea-tree brake brought us to the edge of the moorland, an entirely different class of country, consisting of dwarf banksia and she-oak and small tea-tree besides many other plants of great variety belonging to drier conditions. The change of country accounts for a change in bird life, and the Striated Field Wren and Tawny Crowned Honey-eater were heard.

At the February meeting a paper on "Cormorants and Fisheries" was read by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley. The hypothesis was that Cormorants helped to preserve the balance of nature, and that fish were not unduly reduced in numbers by them. The subject was well discussed and facts were quoted to prove that Cormorants were not voracious feeders but that they would consume on the average not more than about 1½ lbs. of fish per day. They fed largely on slower moving fish not food kinds, and on yabbies and young turtle, especially during the nesting period. By thus keeping in check crustacean and other enemies of fish ova, Cormorants actually allowed fish to become more plentiful.

There was a good attendance at the outing at Yarra Glen on March 1, in spite of the inclement weather. A list of about 40 species was compiled. Miss Wigan gave a most interesting address on her trip abroad and made several references to her bird observations.

The Leach Memorial Club has carried out a regular series of outings. This is an interesting case of symbiosis, because this section provides the field outings, while the B.O.C. attends mainly to the indoor lectures and meetings.

The Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria organised a bird evening on March 9, at which our members were present by invitation. Films were exhibited of bird life, both in Victoria and in Britain, and probably for the first time in Melbourne was such a collection shown. Mr. R. Littlejohns's "Life History of the Lyrebird" was screened first, and fascinated the audience with the results obtained in dark forest where light and all other conditions are against photography. The unique portion showing the male bird displaying was stated to have taken five years to obtain, although occupying only five minutes on the screen. Great credit is due to the photographer and to the producer. Short films were shown of the Red-capped Dotterel nesting on a sandy shore and of flocks of Ibis breeding on the Moira marshes near the Murray.

The second part of the evening consisted of two British nature films of astonishing interest. Edgar Chance depicted in "The Life of the Cuckoo" most of his observations already well known in print. The female Cuckoo approaching and sitting upon a Lark's nest, then carrying away an egg of the host bird in her bill, after depositing her own, together with the uncanny processes of ejection by the young cuckoo of the foster parent's nestlings, were shown with great clearness. A Golden Eagle rearing its offspring in the granite crags was another outstanding triumph of nature photography under most difficult conditions. This included a magnificent slow motion of the bird in flight.

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## News and Notes

The following new members have recently been enrolled:—R. Emerson, 12 Oakville Street, Willoughby, N.S.W.; Sister Mary Ignatius, St. Charles Villa, Springwood, N.S.W.; O. Clark, Moree, N.S.W.; G. King, 143 High Street, Glen Iris, Vic.; Corio Ornithologists' Society, Geelong Grammar School, Corio, Vic.; H. C. Tuttle, 31 State Street, Boston, U.S.A.; A. R. Hughes, c/o. Comml. Pine Forests Ltd., Colombo, Ceylon; Keston Foreign Bird Farm, Kent, England; Mrs. J. W. McGregor, Box 325, Cairns, Qld.; L. D. Cameron, c/o Thomas & Cameron, Hilly Street, Mortlake, N.S.W.; Marquis Yoshimaro Yamashina, 49 Nampo-dai Shibuya-Machi, Tokyo; Mrs. S. B. Quinn, 8 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, Vic.; R. H. Greenwood, c/o Union Bank, Dimboola, Vic.; N. H. E. McDonald, Kulwin, Vic.; John Bright, Rochester, Vic.; S. P. Baldwin, 25 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.

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A copy of Mathews's *Birds of Australia*, complete in unbound parts, in perfect order, is available for sale. Apply Hon. General Secretary.