

## Obituary

J. W. MELLOR.

Members of the R.A.O.U. will regret to learn of the death of Mr. J. W. Mellor, which took place suddenly on October 10, at Lockleys, South Australia. Mr. Mellor rendered the science of ornithology a lifetime of keen work. He evinced a love for the science from childhood, and as a small boy started ornithological and oological, as well as entomological collections, which were added to from year to year until his death. Mr. Mellor took a great interest in the R.A.O.U. He was a foundation member, and, up to a few years before his demise, he had not missed a conference or a camp-out. Mr. Mellor represented South Australia in November, 1908, at the interstate conference on Bird Protection held in Melbourne, and no one did more in South Australia for the protection of birds than he. Privations and discomforts were never heeded when fighting for the safety of his feathered friends. Mr. Mellor became President of the R.A.O.U. in October, 1911.

The deceased was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. John Mellor, of "Holmfirth," Fulham, South Australia. His family were staunch friends and supporters of the Union for many years. Death has claimed most of the family, and others have become scattered. Older members of the Union must have pleasant recollections of close association with his family at every annual gathering for the first 20 years. In the passing away of J. W. Mellor, ornithology has lost a hard worker and staunch friend of the birds as well as a kindly-natured and trustful friend. He leaves a young widow and family.—S.A.W.

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## Reviews

[Measurements of Birds. By S. Prentiss Baldwin, Harry C. Oberholser, and Leonard G. Worley. Illustrations by James Manson Valentine. Scientific Publication of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., 165 pp. Price \$1.00 and carriage.]

In the study of birds, not by the æsthetically-inclined amateur, but by the trained scientist, measurements are essential for the differentiation of certain species. Our Australian Prions (*Pachyptila* spp.) form, perhaps, one of the best examples of this statement. Many workers, however, do not stop at this point, but go on to the more intricate business of separating a species into its various sub-species. In that task, accurate measurement is absolutely essential, and a still greater essential is that the anatomical points

between which measurements are made, should be accurately defined. In the present publication, the authors have attempted to fix a uniform system of measurements. They have described a very large number of these and have been careful to explain accurately in all cases the anatomical positions from which they work. Moreover, to aid further in securing uniformity, the volume is liberally supplied with excellently-drawn cuts in black and white in which the actual distance measured is clearly shown—151 illustrations in all. Much of the value of the publication lies in these illustrations. In addition to the ordinary measurements of total length, wing, tail, culmen and tarsus, the authors give explicit directions for measuring such details as the position of the nasal fossa on the maxilla, and not content with these minutiae, they go farther and show how to localise even the position of the nostril within the nasal fossa. But who shall say that such details are unimportant? For the scientific worker who deals in sub-species, such measurements may throw upon his research a flood of hitherto undiscovered light,

A bibliography at the end of the volume deals only with those publications in which the various authors have made even an elementary attempt to define the anatomical points from which their measurements have been made. A short résumé of their methods is appended in each case. A brief glance through this section shows clearly the lack of uniformity that has hitherto prevailed. Admittedly this is a book for the specialist. But none the less it bridges a large gap in the literature of ornithology. We plead for international uniformity in the nomenclature of birds; we should extend an equally hearty welcome to a work that pleads for uniformity in the measurements of birds.—C.S.

[“The Art of Bird Watching.” A Practical Guide to Field Observation. By E. M. Nicholson. Published by H. F. & G. Witherby, 326 High Holborn, London, W.C. 216 pp. Price, 10/6.]

The writer of this work has opened up many problems in bird life which will provide ample opportunities for the future field observers. Few ornithologists are better equipped to write a work on this subject than Mr. Nicholson, who, besides being the author of other books on bird study, was attached to the Oxford University Expeditions to Greenland and British Guiana, where bird observing was carried out under specially provided conditions. As pointed out in the preface, bird watching is either the most scientific of sports or the most sporting of sciences, but this depends on the spirit in which it is pursued. The work deals with every aspect of bird watching, from the necessary equipment of an observer to the value of the results obtained through careful study. There are chapters deal-

ing with bird banding, courtship, bird behaviour, territory, migration, song, bird census and many other sidelights pertaining to the habits of birds.

In setting out the numerous avenues through which profitable results will be obtained by careful study, the author makes many suggestions which will be helpful to field workers. Accuracy, the author contends, should be the aim of every bird watcher, and he says that "no mistake is commoner or more discreditable to the man who makes it than careless announcements of birds being met with at highly improbable times, and in very unlikely places." By the frequent references to some of the methods used for bird observing in both Europe and America it is apparent that Mr. Nicholson has made an extensive study of his subject, and his deductions on many of the methods are worthy of perusal. The work, which is illustrated with photographs, maps and diagrams, must prove invaluable to the field ornithologist, especially to the field worker in Australia, where so many interesting problems in bird life remain unsolved.—D.J.D.

[Check-list of Birds of the World. By James Lee Peters, Assistant Curator of Birds, Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College. Vol. I, pp. xviii + 345. Published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London. English price, 17/6 net.]

Those who will find use for such a work as this, will, to some extent, appreciate the stupendous task the author has undertaken. What with the great increase of ornithological knowledge, the multifarious writings on the subject, and the introduction of thousands of names, necessary and otherwise, the need for such a list has long been apparent. In this volume a good commencement is made towards the fulfilment of that need. The classification adopted is essentially that of Hans Gadow as arranged and proposed by Wetmore in 1929, which means that although the Falcons conclude the present volume, the Game Birds, Pigeons, Gulls, etc., have yet to be dealt with. References are given for each genus, species and sub-species recognised and for all synonyms of these described since the publication of the first volume of Sharpe's *Handlist*. In addition, synonyms not given in the *Catalogue of Birds* are cited in full. The excellence of this arrangement is obvious.

In the compilation of a work of such magnitude, to vouch for the validity of each species and sub-species recognised, is clearly impossible, so that, in this respect, criticism from the individual viewpoint is to be expected. Nevertheless, great care seems to have been exercised, and, on the whole, the author's treatment of the difficulties is to be commended. Because of this we are puzzled at the retention of a few so-called "species" and "sub-species" based on specimens the

very habitat of which is unknown. The normal range of each bird is outlined and the volume is complete with a list of contents and an index. Continued along the same lines this work will undoubtedly become indispensable to the worker in ornithology.—G.M.

## Report of Bird Observers Club

On the evening of January 18, Mr. F. Chapman, palæontologist to the Commonwealth, gave an account of some "Fossil Birds," illustrated by drawings on the screen, of absorbing interest, tracing back the ancestry of birds as far as the rocks have yielded up their tale. To the question whether any of these very ancient forms had been found in Australia, the answer is "No, not yet," but it is possible that some day the *Archæopteryx* or its allies may be discovered here. *Geryornis*, a Moa-like bird, weighing over a ton, has been unearthed at Lake Callabonna and at Warrnambool, and the footprints of a similar bird have been found in hard sandstone. Near Casterton the feather of a Heron was obtained in bog iron-ore deposit.

The first outing of the year was to Tooradin, an old-fashioned fishing village situated at the mouth of Cardinia Creek, where it enters Westernport Bay. We were able to inspect the strange mangrove belt which lines the shores, so different from anything about the sandy beaches of Port Phillip, and also the flat peat lands, which, before reclamation, were covered with paper-bark tea-tree. In each class of vegetation the bird life peculiar to it was noted. But on the samphire marshes, locally called splashes, we were not fortunate in seeing as many waders as expected. A sight to be long remembered was a grove of memorial gum trees, ablaze with blossom in varying shades of crimson and rose, on which brush-tongued Lorikeets and Honeyeaters were feasting.

The February meeting was devoted to "The Mallee." With a very fine series of lantern pictures, Mr. A. H. Mattingley gave an account of his excursions through that wonderful region of bird life. An outing on February 20 took us to Diamond Creek, where a small sanctuary on private land was inspected, and returning via Eltham the home of Mr. Donald Thomson, B.Sc., was visited. Several kinds of rare Australian marsupials were seen thriving in captivity. In the garden a score of Honeyeaters, including the Regent, was noted upon a flowering aloe. The President referred to the research work being undertaken by Mr. and Mrs. Thomson in northern Australia and said that the best wishes of the Club went with them for a successful journey and a safe return. An outing in March was arranged by Mr. Dickison to Mooroolbark, where we were shown the scenes of many of his successful bird pictures. It is interesting to find that many wild birds are yet in this locality and a list of fifty species can readily be made. Two kinds of bandicoot and rare phalangers have been seen in the brushy places. We took tea by the Olinda Creek while Bell Miners sang a vesper chime.

Mr. R. S. Miller has been appointed Assistant Editor in place of Mr. N. J. Favalaro, who has left Melbourne to practise as a solicitor in Mildura, Victoria.