

Report of the Bird Observers Club

Considerable interest has been taken in the bird-life of the Toolern Vale sanctuary belonging to Mr. V. R. Davey, where, owing to good summer rains, the nesting operations of some species have been continued into the new year. The list of birds identified now reaches 75 species, and we have begun to take a census of the numbers in residence. A log book has been provided for the purpose of entering field notes, which in time should provide a happy record of the bird cabin.

On the evening of January 15 we were treated to a very fine account of Central Australia by Mr. A. H. Mattingley, while the moving pictures shown by Mr. C. Bailey of their recent motor trip will be long remembered. Vivid impressions were given of the boundless plains, the whirling dust, and the quaint vegetation of the desert country, followed by the magnificent contours and extraordinary colourations of the stony central mountains.

The outing in February was to the Metropolitan Board of Works farm at Werribee, a unique place where 50,000 sheep and 15,000 head of cattle are fattening. In miles of shelter belts birds find a home, perhaps the most plentiful species being the Willie Wagtail, over fifty of which were counted in association with the animals.

The second Exhibition proved to be a greater success than last year, although it came as a very great effort for the active members to carry the arrangements through. We feel, however, that we have done our duty to the public in thus undertaking the "popularization" of ornithology mentioned in our rules. The outstanding exhibit was the Lyrebird upon its dancing mound, arranged by the president, Miss Wigan and Mr. E. S. Hanks in a bush setting, for the first time showing the tail expanded in full display over the back, and the taxidermist, Mr. John Cunningham, of the National Museum, is to be congratulated on his work. Other unique exhibits were birds' nests shown by Messrs. Chalk, Davey, and Tonge, bird paintings by Mrs. Fleay and Miss F. M. Irby, drawings and pastels by young members of the Gould League through their secretary, Mr. H. N. Beck, and photographs of birds from nature by Messrs. Lang, Mattingley, and Sharland. Mummified Ibis and Hawks, taken from the tombs of Egypt, were shown by Mr. C. Le Souef, and a rare collection of bird skins from Cape York was sent by Mr. Donald Thomson, B.Sc. Substantial exhibits of mounted birds were lent by the Department of Agriculture, the National Museum, and the R.A.O.U. Council. Club members were in attendance to explain exhibits and answer questions. Rev. Geo. Cox staged a general collection of natural history specimens on behalf of the League of Nature Lovers, and was a centre of attraction to many young people.

The newly formed League of Youth (Aust.) made its first appearance in public in a setting of posters and pamphlets, Mr. R. H. Croll and the organiser, Mr. A. J. Swaby, being in charge. As both R.A.O.U. and B.O.C. are represented on the council of this new body, its ambitious objectives may here be noted. They are the development of a sense of pride in community service and the fostering of a love of nature, specially Australian fauna and flora and other assets of scientific, historic, or cultural value.
