

**An Item of Nomenclature.**—While walking along the Don River (Tasmania) on June 17, I saw a couple of urchins with a white terrier, hunting in a large patch of half-burnt blackberries. I asked them if they had a rabbit cornered in the bushes. The elder boy said: "No, a guttersnipe!" On my asking "What's that?", he said, "There it goes," and I saw a bird with brownish back running quickly under the tangled stems to thicker cover. It was not a Quail; from the brief glimpse afforded, I believe it to have been a Spotless Crake (*Porzana plumbea*). The boys did not capture it; but what struck me was the name they bestowed upon it. It appeared a not inappropriate name for a species the favourite haunts of which are the moist margins of ponds and streams.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tasmania, 25/7/34.

## Correspondence

To the Editor.

Sir,—In connection with the changing of the hue in the comb of the Lotus-bird (*Irrediparra gallinacea*) and the criticism by Mr. K. Hindwood (*The Emu*, July, 1934) of the statements made by Mr. J. Potter (*The Emu*, April, 1934), it appears to me that undue importance is being attached to this phenomenon, considering how fairly frequently it is seen in Nature. The suggestions of Mr. Potter are put forward as *theories*, such as anyone is entitled to advance—witness Mr. Hindwood's sun-light theory—not as indisputable reasons for the colour change.

Whatever the reason may be, one thing is beyond argument, and that is, the change is due to vaso-motor action. For the benefit of any who may not know what is meant by such action, I may state that the dilation and contraction of the arteries—hence redness and pallor respectively—are controlled by what may be called the "second nervous system," the centre for which is the solar plexus, which in turn is controlled by the "feelings." This constitutes the delicate "sympathetic nervous system," branches of which supply the muscular walls of the vessels. Evidence of its action may be seen in human beings when the emotions (which govern the centre) are stirred, causing pallor of the face in times of peril, fear, etc., flushing (or blushing) as a tell-tale signal in prevarication, or on harmless accusation, affection, etc., e.g. "the tell-tale flush" (romantic emotion). There are some who can "turn on" this romance at will, but not the pallor. Some can *prevent* both by exercising great will-power in suppression, but on the whole,

it is uncontrollable in man, and probably is, in birds. Here again, who can but theorise? Does the Turkey cock colour up his wattles at will, or is it a reflex?—Yours, etc.,

E. A. D'OMBRAIN, M.B., etc.

Sydney, New South Wales.

August 28, 1934.

To the Editor.

Sir,—Mr. K. A. Hindwood's criticism published in *The Emu* (Vol. xxxiv, 1934, p. 51, *et seq.*), on my article about the Jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*) published in *The Emu* (Vol. xxxiii, 1934, p. 298 *et seq.*), has led me to believe that he has somewhat misunderstood my intentions with regard to hypotheses advanced by me in connection with observations recorded, etc. I would like to make it quite clear that these were advanced by me as *suggestions only*. My recorded observations stand firm, although Mr. Hindwood has in some respects doubted their authenticity.

When it is known that the yellow flower referred to in my suggestions in connection with the changing of colour of the Jacana's comb from red to yellow, is not *Jussieua repens*, as stated by my critic, it will be realised how unhappily his remarks about my "somewhat hasty conclusions" are applicable to his case. The "hasty conclusion" in my case was the result of a good deal of thought on the subject, and, I am pleased to say, can be further substantiated after my recent observations amongst this bird on the Clarence River swamps. At a later date I will submit notes and illustrations collected there on this most interesting subject. The flower I refer to, although I have not yet had it identified, has blooms from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, and grows abundantly at Wilberforce and on the Clarence.

I do not intend to go into detail in reply to Mr. Hindwood's other remarks, but would like to say the following:—"In the first instance his references to previous records of stray specimens being found south of the Clarence River have no bearing upon the recent record of a definite habitat on the Hawkesbury. The former records were of sporadic occurrences, whilst the latter is a definite new permanent distribution record. Then the fact that Mr. Hindwood has not himself seen a definite change in the colouring of the Jacana's comb previously referred to cannot detract from the value of other ornithologists' undisputed observations in this connection. The suggestion about light causing the change is, in my opinion, wrong. That opinion is borne out in Dr. E. A. D'Ombrain's records on the subject published in *The Emu*, Vol. xxxiv, p. 46. Few will dispute the fact that man is not the only enemy the

Jacana would have in mind when constructing more than one nesting platform if it is its intention to deceive. What of the birds of prey which inhabit swamps, as, for instance, the Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*).

The writer has just received a further communication from Mr. Ken Cobcroft, of Wilberforce, dated September 6, 1934, in which he states that he has had under observation three Jacanas since their hatching on his property last season, and has noted that their plumage is fully developed, including the combs which are quite red. This is approximately six months after hatching.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES POTTER.

Lismore, N.S.W., 12/9/34.

To the Editor.

Sir,—In *The Emu* of July, page 62, I made reference to a chestnut-backed Wren which I had not at the time of writing identified. I have since secured a male specimen, which Mr. H. A. Longman, of the Queensland Museum, compared with the skins in the Museum collection. He has definitely identified the bird as *Malurus lamberti*.—Yours, etc.,

E. A. R. LORD.

Murphy's Creek, Qld., September 16, 1934.

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Papers entitled "Birds of the Musgrave Ranges," by J. Neil McGilp, and "Birds Inhabiting Mangroves in the Neighbourhood of Sydney," by K. A. Hindwood, have been received, and are being held for the Congress.

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Members of the Union will regret to hear of the death of Mrs. Barbara Nicholls, who died on August 30, 1934. The deceased was the wife of our member, Dr. E. Brooke Nicholls, and the sister of the late Mr. J. W. Mellor, a former President of the Union. Mrs. Nicholls formerly attended many of the Union's Camps-out, and was always interested in natural history matters.

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The following new members have been enrolled:—C. K. Pawsey, 16 Moorabbin Road, Mentone, Vic.; Dr. D. L. Serventy, B.Sc., Ph.D. (Camb.), c/o University of Western Australia, Perth, W.A. (rejoined); J. Masters, "Glen Avon," Northam, W.A.; Mrs. Mary House, Charvel Station, Theodore, Qld.; N.S.W. Gould League (D. Leithhead), 9 Royal Street, Maroubra, N.S.W.; A. F. Embury, Rural District School, Manilla, N.S.W.