

## Some Problems

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

By A. G. CAMPBELL, Kilsyth, Victoria

"The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!"

With regard to our friends the birds can we rest content with the treatment meted out by the last century of progress? Lands have been sold into private hands and cleared for agriculture without any thought whatever of the part birds play in the scheme of things, Crown lands are leased to be scourged annually by fire, and State forests which were or should be the chief assets of national importance, are so diminished that but little remains of the original conditions evolved by Nature from time immemorial to suit our particular soils and climate. It is almost unbelievable that bush fires ravish over half a million acres each summer. The roar of those fires, often purposely lit, is heard afar and near. The loss to the State in native life alone cannot be computed. It is a national disgrace and apparently it is nobody's business to take the matter in hand.

I can only touch casually upon the general aspects of these problems. Again we must ask ourselves: are birds decreasing about settlement compared with even a quarter of a century ago? Does poisoning for rabbits and "hoppers" kill birds? Are any birds really harmful?

The pity of it is there are no official bureaux nor, as yet, any farmers' societies with the least interest in research among bird life, to take up the challenge that lies in such questions. So it is left to dilettante hobbyists like ourselves to make what contribution we feel inclined to make. We are not in the position of Britain, with a more limited field and many more workers. The sanctuaries alone there—and some are for game purposes mainly—are actually a greater percentage of the total area than they are in Australia, while the control of them is organized to some degree of efficiency. The word sanctuary should be a slogan for every nature lover in Australia, signifying the idea of a place and a home where every form of our interesting life may find protection from the despoiler.

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My congratulations are offered to all members, who, during the past twelve months, have been pursuing some branch of practical ornithology. A fine paper has appeared in our journal touching upon migration routes and calendars, while another, more statistical, upon the food of birds, paves the way for a recognition of their economic value. A very fine suggestion comes from a correspondent who thinks there should be an editorial. For the present.



Mr. A. G. Campbell, President R.A.O.U., 1934-35.

lacking volunteers with material, this might be difficult to provide, but any member who has matter of general importance should forward it as a letter to the Editor. Through all the articles and stray notes published in *The Emu* can be read the intense interest which a love of birds creates in the observer. Few more absorbing pastimes could be found than bird lore as a relaxation from the machined activities of modern life. Yet when it comes to figures our membership represents only one person to every 15,000 inhabitants, or one to every 7,600 square miles of territory; and of these only fourteen per cent. have contributed to the matter appearing in the last volume of *The Emu*. What opportunities lie afield? Members with a bent for oology should press on with that branch, because too little is known of the domestic economy of birds, a subject full of fascination. There are many other branches of the study which have both present interest and practical value.

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The next group of problems that confronts us is amongst members themselves as a body corporate. Have we ever considered team work sufficiently to encourage a steady growth of the Union and enlargement of its activities? The routine work at present falls upon the shoulders of the Editor, the Secretary and the Treasurer, all of them honorary officers, but why leave things at an irreducible minimum? Some years ago I ventured to write upon this business aspect and possible co-operation among members of the Union. See *The Emu*, vol. xxvi, p. 193, and vol. xxviii, p. 70. No better scheme has been put forward, and this one has been tried in at least one direction with marked success. Local organization of branches will be for the benefit of the Union as a whole. We are all members of a company interested in the birds. Each must take the corporate view and give his own particular support and encouragement to the objectives. It is our business also to interest other people; a very practical way being for every member to endeavour to propose at least one new member every year. Fields of activity will open up and enlarge in increasing ratio. The statement of Omar Khayyám about the Nightingale is not a modern one. The mark of exclamation bespeaks a fuddled philosophy more than a scientific query.

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I feel proud of the work contributed during my term of office toward the formation of the League of Youth of Australia, founded for the protection and preservation of the flora and fauna, and for the development of ideals of citizenship in the minds of young Australians. Members are now to be found in several States. Each society which joins the League will continue to do its own work in its own way, but should feel that its aims and activities now have a

wider significance, because of the will to create a public conscience for the restoration of our national assets of use and beauty. Nature study as a primary force in education will be reinstated. In Victoria the Education Department is the spearhead, having embodied these ideals in its school curriculum.

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So the problems come together, our hobby and our Union. The builders of the past not only foresaw development, but expect us to lend a hand. We owe a great debt to the past. Unselfish work by the founders of the Union, which gave them much pleasure in the doing, has brought opportunities little thought of in their time, giving us advantages which we subconsciously absorb. We can find delight, deep and significant, in contributing some little thought and action toward the ideals, for the profound reason that this is fulfilling our best instincts and emotions.

They, too, never lost sight of the secondary objectives of the Union, namely, the propagation of bird lore among the public and the young. In social service of this character lie the greatest lasting benefits to each one personally, to the Union generally, and the community as a whole. We need neither ask nor beg for money, but we can show that we use it wisely, so encouraging benefactors and our successors in the common aims. The old world is awaiting constructive optimism and concerted action of this lively sort.

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**Stray Visitors.**—On June 13, 1935, on entering my garden at mid-day, a pair of rather friendly Honeyeaters were observed sipping nectar from a flowering shrub (*Salvia* sp.). Little difficulty was found in establishing the identity of this newcomer to the district as the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (*Gliciphila melanops*). On mentioning the fact to my wife, she volunteered the information that a large flock had appeared the previous day in the flowering eucalypts one hundred yards from the house. Investigation showed that they were very numerous, and although they moved on in the course of a day or two, these interesting little strangers favoured us with a further visit during July.

Two other newcomers amongst the honey-loving forms were identified as the Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*). The former was plentiful all the winter and, along with Little Lorikeets, Noisy and Little Friar-birds, made the daylight hours a bedlam. Rainbow Lorikeets were only noted on two occasions—in June.—GEO. W. ALTHOFER, Jun., Dripstone, N.S.W.