

The Australian Natives' Association, claimant for credit for sponsoring appeals on grave national problems, is championing action to prevent soil erosion. It has issued a brochure entitled "Soil Conservation," which is full of pertinent references and illustrative examples. Soil and water waste in the ancient civilizations, in modern India, in Africa and the U.S.A., has been alarming and almost unbelievable in its extent. Australia's problems loom large and require *immediate* attention. Excessive clearing, overstocking, faulty cultivation methods, ravages of rabbits—the first three of which are man's fault solely and entirely and whereof the remedy is bound up with common sense—all play their part; bush-fires, of which 95 per cent. are undoubtedly the result of fires deliberately lighted, and denuding of watersheds contribute their share.

It is a platitude to assert as novel the influence that forest and water waste must have on bird life. The ecological relationship is a complete unit, all parts of which disintegrate as some break up. Species are decimated, driven out, exterminated, by man's follies, and not the least of these is his crass stupidity in wasting the substance that, conserved and used to the best advantage, will be productive whilst retaining something of its own original nature.—C.E.B.

In future books reviewed which are *not* in the R.A.O.U. library will be marked with an asterisk. Of publications reviewed in the earlier numbers of the present volume, the following are in that category: *Studies in the Life History of the Song-Sparrow*; *B.A.N.Z. Antarctic Research Expedition Reports—Birds*.

Correspondence

To the Editor

Sir,—Writing on behalf of the Trustees of the Lake Clarendon Pasturage Reserve, I wish to correct two statements appearing in your last number. Note of these misstatements is only taken because they are made by accredited officials of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

G. H. Barker, Branch Secretary for Queensland, writing under date September 24, 1937 (*The Emu*, vol. XXXVII, p. 202), states: "Lake Clarendon . . . has had no water in it for months past and the hordes of water fowl . . . have practically disappeared." The facts are that since March the lake was full to overflowing during 1937, and many and various birds frequented it and bred there.

L. M. Mayo, who is understood to be a member of the Council of the above Union, on page 238 of the same volume, writes: "Motored to Lake Clarendon, a water sanctuary enclosed by public subscription." The facts are that the

Lake Clarendon Pasturage Reserve was fenced by the Trustees many years ago, and recently a breeding ground has, by private subscription, been fenced off from vermin and stock within this main reserve.—Yours, etc.,

N. I. WESTERGAARD NEILSEN,

Chairman of Trustees.

Lake Clarendon, via Gatton, Qld.

19/2/38.

To the Editor

Sir,—I note in *The Emu* for January, 1938, a paragraph written by Mr. W. H. Sloane of Bonnie Doon entitled "The Value of Bird Life." I should like to comment on some of the statements made by Mr. Sloane.

He says that "unfortunately, one of the chief reasons" given for the proposed whole year protection of wild ducks in Victoria is that "it is to prevent reduction in numbers of birds which it is important should be preserved as game birds." No such comment has ever been made by this Department. The complete protection of the wild ducks for this year was given because, owing to lack of suitable conditions in south-eastern Australia, there was very little natural increase in these birds, and it was therefore necessary to give the added protection so that the species should be adequately preserved, but not because they were specifically "game birds."

Another statement made by Mr. Sloane was that "although man has destroyed the habitat of ducks by the draining of swamps he has created reservoirs, channels, dams and tanks which should offset the destruction of the natural breeding places of the birds and therefore result in more birds." It should be borne in mind that the reservoirs and dams created by the State in recent years are practically useless from the point of view of the reproduction and feeding of water birds such as wild ducks. The original swamps where these birds bred in millions were on the whole shallow, weedy, well timbered areas giving an abundance of food, shelter and breeding facilities. The huge reservoirs and dams constructed in recent years are deep waters with little food and hardly any breeding facilities. Their only value is in the shooting season when the birds migrate thereto to get away from the guns.

From the point of view of conservation and breeding of wild ducks the whole of the dams and reservoirs in this State—and their area is quite considerable—are not worth one moderate area of swamp land in its original condition.—Yours, etc.,

F. LEWIS,

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Melbourne, Vic., 26/1/38.