

birds were actually seen, the calling was continuous and was clearly uttered by numbers of birds. I had little expectation of adding these brush-loving birds to my local list for suitable habitat is entirely absent. However, some densely-foliaged trees in the residential allotment neighbouring mine evidently suited for their short stay. The disturbing influence of the unusual visitors amongst the regular resident species in this area was very noticeable.—A. R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W., 4/12/42.

Reviews

Decisions on Nomenclature.—Since the secretariat of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature was moved to London, eleven 'Opinions' embodying decisions on nomenclatural points have been published, the first, Opinion 134, on August 28, 1939, and the most recent, Opinion 144, on March 30, 1943. Most of the Opinions deal with entomological names. Three, however, concern ornithology. Opinion 138 gives an interpretation of the amended Article 25 of the International Rules (the 'Law of Priority') and refers to the method to be used in the replacement of invalid names. This clears up an ambiguity which was the subject of a controversy in the *Bull. B.O.C.*, vol. LV, 1935, and means that several of Gregory Mathews' names, proposed since January 1, 1931 (when the amendment came into force) have no nomenclatural status. Opinion 141 establishes the principle that the type genus of a family or subfamily—from which the family or subfamily name is constructed—need not be the oldest available genus but that the author of a new family is free to choose as type genus any which he considers appropriate. Opinion 140 confirms 'Meropidae' as the spelling of the family name for *Merops*; that for the insect *Merope* being 'Meropeidae'.—D.L.S.

Systematics and the Origin of Species.—This is the title of a book by Dr. Ernst Mayr, of the American Museum of Natural History, published by the Columbia University Press, 1942, which is the most brilliant exposition yet of the species problem, treated from the taxonomic standpoint. To the Australian ornithologist not the least merit of the work is that so many examples from the Australian and Pacific avifaunas are drawn on as illustrations, and nobody interested in taxonomy generally or in geographical distribution can afford to be without it, both as a reference and a stimulus. Ornithology is in a peculiar position to render service to other branches of zoology in this field because, as Dr. Mayr points out, no group is better known taxonomically than the birds, and the refined state of present-day bird systematics presents leaders and pointers to taxonomists in other groups. To these workers, in fact, not to know something of the present state of ornithological taxonomy and its special problems is to remain blind to their own future goal. In this lucid and attractively written book it may be said that Dr. Mayr has 'sold' to taxonomists at large the concept of the polytypic species (the species viewed as a group of geographically-intergrading populations, or subspecies), and has presented his evidence adequately and with a wide perspective, including a discussion of associated problems such as phenotypic variants, sibling species and generic limits. There is a very useful preliminary chapter on methods and principles. The American price of the book is \$4.—D.L.S.

The date of publication was October 1, 1943.