

Reviews

The Grass-Owls.—Revision is the order of the day, and the latest affecting Australian birds is that of the Indo-Australian Grass-Owls, by Dean Amadon and Stanley G. Jewett, Jr., in the October *Auk*. Hitherto two species have been recognized—*capensis*, occurring in Africa, and *longimembris*, with a discontinuous range from the southern slopes of the Himalaya Mountains in India, and China, to northern and eastern Australia, and southern Western Australia. These two species were recognized by Peters in the fourth volume of his *Check-list of the Birds of the World*, but he commented that 'Knowledge of *Tyto longimembris* is so fragmentary that not even Hartert was able to revise the species satisfactorily; the races recognized here are the same as he recognized in his 1929 review [*Novitates Zoologicae*, 35, 1929, 93-104]'. Amadon and Jewett treat the two forms as conspecific, the name *capensis* having priority. The Australian form becomes *Tyto capensis walleri* Diggles, 1866, with distribution Celebes, Kalidupa (and perhaps other islands north of Australia), and northern Australia. They tentatively include in this subspecies the forms occurring in New Caledonia and Fiji, but accept the New Guinea and Philippines forms as different races. It will be noticed that the authors limit the range to northern Australia, quite ignoring G. A. Keartland's statement that the bird occurs, on occasions, as far south as Melbourne. A further omission is reference to the occurrence of an individual in southern Western Australia, as recorded by L. Glauert in this journal in January, 1945 (*maculosa*).

Some years ago the reviewer put forward the suggestion in this journal that overseas workers on Australian bird forms might find it worthwhile to get in touch with ornithologists in Australia before publication. In the present revision no specimens in Australia appear to have been included, although the authors comment on their lack of material, and the latest Australian literature on the subject has been ignored.—H.M.W.

Inter-specific Competition.—In the light of the thesis worked out by the American, G. F. Gause, in his book *The Struggle for Existence* (1934), that two species with the same ecology cannot persist together in the same region and when they compete for the same food supply one must inevitably eliminate the other, David Lack has in a very stimulating fashion analysed some recently-published German data on the food habits of hawks and owls ('Competition for food by birds of prey,' *Journ. Anim. Ecol.*, 15, 1946, 123-129). He shows that among German hawks and owls no two congeneric species compete for food in the same habitat. "Either they differ in habitat, in which case their hunting methods and the size of their prey are sometimes similar, or they live in the same habitat, in which case their hunting methods and/or the size of their prey are different." Species in different genera obey the same rule, with the apparent exception of those which feed on voles. Lack believes that in this case, though several species prey upon the vole, they are not really in competition owing to the vole populations being, temporarily, in a state of superabundance. It is suggested that during the periods between vole plagues, when vole numbers decline to a minimum, the predators revert to alternative prey foods, each different for the particular predator species. Analogous cases occur in the sea when during periods of krill superabundance many creatures, such as whales and petrels, combine to feed on them.—D.L.S.

New Form of Petrel.—In October, 1945, nesting 'mutton-birds' with habits different from those of local petrels puzzled observers at Westland, New Zealand. Investigations, later, showed that *Procellaria parkinsoni* was the bird under consideration. In all respects the form

is larger than the nominate race, in addition to which it is a winter breeder. In the *Records of the Canterbury Museum*, vol. v, no. 2, pp. 111-113, Nov. 1946, Dr. R. A. Falla describes this new form under the name of *P. p. westlandica* and gives an account of its discovery.

It is suggested that the smaller race may also nest in the same locality in summer and that the subspecific differences are not matters of geographical replacement but of physiological isolation.—C.E.B.

Books by Members.—Crabbe's verses of cities and towns—"the various haunts of men, require the pencil; they defy the pen"—might well apply to those things of beauty, well-laid-out gardens, and Crosbie Morrison has wisely made his book, *Melbourne's Garden*, a pictorial record, to press home that verdant grace that cannot adequately be put into words. Not that the author's literary style does not do justice to the subject: the combination of literary and photographic ability is a happy one. The book, to commemorate the centenary of the Botanic Gardens, is published by the Melbourne University Trust for the Maud Gibson Trust, and is priced at 21/-. It deals with such matters as the Gardens' founders, 'Australian Flora', 'Some Famous Trees', the tropical and exotic beauties of the glasshouses, 'Making Landscapes' and 'Birds of the Gardens', this last chapter having something of a water-bird bias, for that aspect is well to the fore in the Gardens.

David Fleay's contributions to *The Emu* are always marked by careful records and detailed observations, and that style is the pattern for accounts, of the 'specialized possums', contained in his *Gliders of the Gum Trees* (Melbourne, Bread and Cheese Club). No one is more competent than Mr. Fleay to present an intimate account of these arboreal creatures, the gliders, for not only has he acquired a deep insight into their domestic economy from observations of captive animals, but he has always been a 'bush-whacker' and one with a convenient flair for running across bush animals in their natural haunts.

Mr. L. E. Richdale, who has been publishing both scientific papers and popular pamphlets, is now projecting bird books for children, and *Podgy the Penguin* is no. 1 of a contemplated series. The style is easy and entertaining, the sketches are in keeping. Although the account is 'written down' for youthful readers, there is accuracy throughout. Mr. Richdale refers to having made over 1,000 visits, involving 40,000 travelling miles, to penguin rookeries, under which circumstances his knowledge of the group must be far from 'fragmentary', as he states.—C.E.B.

News and Notes

BANDING MUTTON-BIRDS

In the course of a population study of the Tasmanian Mutton-bird or Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) conducted jointly by the C.S.I.R. and Tasmanian Fauna Board last March, at the Flinders Island area, a considerable number of birds was banded. The rings are of copper and bear the following inscription, with a serial number—"Notify Fauna Board, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia." Remains of this species commonly occur on east Australian beaches between September and January, and members in a position to do so are asked to keep a careful watch out for marked birds during the coming season. New Zealand ornithologists are also asked to