

Tasmanian Notes.—There have been criticisms of the ‘tucking away’ of new records in journals with restricted publication, with which we feel inclined to agree. There are two such matters in no. 2 of vol. 1 of *The Tasmanian Naturalist*, May 1947, namely a note establishing Pedra Branca as an authentic nesting place of the Gannet (p. 14) and a brief account of the breeding place of the Masked Owl (*Tyto castanops*) (p. 17). This does not, however, describe the eggs. There are other notes on the ‘Flight of Mutton-birds’ and ‘Birds of South Bruny.’ We wish the magazine success.—C.E.B.

Western Australian Notes.—No. 1 of volume 1 of *The Western Australian Naturalist*, June 18, 1947, is well produced and on good paper. The editorship is in the hands of Dr. D. L. Serventy. Bird material includes ‘Birds observed at sea in 1938,’ by L. Glauert, and ‘Breeding of the Black and white Fantail,’ by Eric Sedgwick. Some ‘generalizations’ in the latter cover triple (and sometimes quadruple) broods, brooding and nestling periods, moult and egg-clutches. This magazine should do much to co-ordinate natural history in ‘the West.’—C.E.B.

The ‘Seldom-seen’ Lyrebird.—Admittedly Mr. Larry Boys’ account in the *Avicultural Magazine*, vol. 53, no. 3, May-June 1947, entitled “‘See the Lyre-bird and Die,’ say Australians,” is popular and ‘breezy,’ but it does wrongly suggest that in the Sherbrooke ‘forest,’ where one can scarcely fail to encounter several birds on the occasion of *any* visit, Lyrebirds are difficult to come by (especially to ‘us locals’). It also suggests that Sherbrooke (where pine trees sway their un-Australian branches around the borders and picnickers’ shouts provide almost the most common sound) is primeval forest, a venture into which is an adventure indeed. All casual writers on the Lyrebird should be cautious about committing the bird to imitations of artificial sounds—for these notes are often the bird’s own calls or sounds not readily referable to other birds’ songs. Education on this aspect could, however, properly ‘begin at home.’—C.E.B.

News and Notes

STRUCTURE OF BIRDS

The August meeting of members was held at the Zoology School, University of Melbourne, on Friday evening, August 1. The speaker, Professor W. Agar, Professor of Zoology, was introduced by Mr. C. E. Bryant. About forty people were present. The small attendance was disappointing, as the subject, ‘Bird Structures,’ is an important part of ornithological study and the speaker an authority on the subject. The close attention of the audience indicated appreciation of the incisive presentation of the address, of one hour’s duration and using impromptu sketching to illustrate various points, together with plaster casts, mounted skeletons and prepared blackboard drawings.

The development of present-day birds (and mammals) was traced from the fishes, amphibians and reptiles of succeeding Ages, including the wing structure of the pterodactyls, *Archaeopteryx*, and the modern bird. It was emphasized that flight was developed independently among three groups of vertebrates—in the reptiles, leading to the pterodactyls; in the birds, developing through forms such as

Archaeopteryx; and in the mammals, leading to the bats. The main divisions of modern birds—mounted skeletons of the Emu and a domestic fowl effectively demonstrating the breastbone 'keel'—were dealt with, and then, step by step, the muscle system for flight, the intricate structure of feathers, the respiratory system with supplementary air-sacs to the lungs, body temperatures, the breeding mechanism, and egg formation, egg structure, and changes during the incubation cycle, were treated.

After the address, those present examined microscopic slides showing feather structure and progressive stages of embryo development, and were able to put queries directly to Professor Agar.

Messrs. Bryant and F. G. Elford expressed the thanks of the gathering to Professor Agar for his enlightening address and the clarity of its presentation.

NOVEMBER MEETING

The next quarterly study meeting of the Union will take the form of an excursion to Upper Beaconsfield on Sunday, November 30. The object will be to explore the Cardinia Creek valley, and to attempt a census of Victoria's rare honeyeater (*Meliphaga cassidix*).

This area has much other interest at that time of the year, native flowers and orchids being plentiful, and members are invited to bring their friends. Take two meals.

Train from Melbourne to Dandenong 8.50 a.m., fare (2nd return) 1/7. Bus to nearest point of creek to Upper Beaconsfield 5/- return.

As the bus has been chartered for the trip, at least 30 passengers are required. Bookings should be made before November 21 with Miss Ina Watson (FA 8555), Mr. Crosbie Morrison (JM 1564), or the Hon. Editor (MU 7652).

DONATIONS INVITED

Substantial donations have been received from The Gould League of New South Wales and The Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. These will be applied towards the cost of an additional part of *The Emu*. Donations from members generally to help defray such cost will be appreciated.

BOOKS WANTED

A member of the R.A.O.U. wishes to purchase a complete set of *The Birds of Australia*, by Gregory M. Mathews, at a reasonable price. Particulars may be sent to the Hon. Editor.

The date of publication was October 1, 1947.