

## Stray Feathers

**The Asiatic Ring Dove as an Escapee.**—Certain introduced species of birds that are well established in parts of Australia to-day probably became acclimatized as aviary escapees. The Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Otocompsa emeria*) is apparently such an example, though early history of it in its adopted country is somewhat obscure. First mention of it in *The Emu*, by W. H. D. LeSouëf (vol. 17, p. 236), is somewhat cursory, but clearly portrays the scanty knowledge of the species at that time. Actually the vernacular name used refers to another well-known Indian bulbul (*Molpastes cafer*), which possesses a conspicuous red vent also, but is differently plumaged otherwise. H. Wolstenholme briefly gives the next *Emu* reference (vol. 21, p. 74) and expresses surprise that "nothing . . . has so far appeared in *The Emu* about an Indian Bulbul that seems to have established itself about Sydney." The Spice Finch (*Lonchura punctulata*), now established in small numbers about Sydney, is also apparently an aviary escapee, yet I do not know of the fact being recorded in any literature; certainly not in *The Emu*. Because of the indefinite origin of introduction of some species, publication of any observation of a foreign bird existing in the free state is warranted, even though it obviously has escaped from an aviary. The expected outcome usually would be that it eventually will die out, by finding either propagation of the race impossible or conditions unsuitable. On the other hand, if a pair be liberated, the species may eventually become established. There is also the possibility of its 'hybridizing' with some other apparently closely-related species.

On August 29, 1946, I recorded what I feel relatively certain was the Asiatic Ring Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) apparently associated with the common introduced Spotted Dove (*S. chinensis*) in a closely-settled Sydney suburban area. It differs from the Spotted Dove in its much lighter coloration, approaching pale cinnamon, on the upper parts, and soft grey on the head and underparts. A black bar was conspicuous on the lower nape. It is slightly smaller in size and its call (repeated frequently) is decidedly more musical than and clearly distinct from that of *chinensis*. My friends who reside in the locality informed me that the bird had been in the vicinity for some weeks to their knowledge and they had earlier detected it as something different, though they took little notice of the fact. The natural distribution of the species is south-eastern Europe, central and southern Asia to Japan.

Intending to purchase a pair of binoculars and anxious to test their power and clarity, I was greatly surprised when the first bird observed was one not previously met

with, causing me momentarily to wonder whether, with new binoculars, I was seeing things in their correct perspective.—A. R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W., 13/8/47.

**Occurrence of the Wandering and Black-browed Albatrosses on New Caledonia.**—Apparently neither of these two albatrosses has heretofore been recorded from New Caledonia or its surrounding waters. On August 19, 1944, I found a decaying carcass (except for one wing) of *Diomedea e. exulans* on the beach at Mt. D'Or, about 15 miles south-east of Noumea. Since this bird had been dead for many days, it may have been the 'huge bird' reported killed by an American soldier about two weeks before near the mouth of the Pirogue River, a few miles south of Mt. D'Or. An almost complete skeleton and many feathers of a Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris*) were picked up just above high-tide mark on the rocky, coral-strewn beach of Woodin Passage opposite Ile Ouen on October 10, 1944. These specimens were identified by Dr. Robert C. Murphy. No reports of other albatrosses came to my attention during my twenty-month stay on New Caledonia. Among the many local inhabitants with whom I discussed birds only a few who had made ocean voyages had any knowledge of albatrosses.

In addition to recording the presence on New Caledonia of two species of albatrosses which normally occur in more southern latitudes, these observations are of interest in that they were made near the date (September 30, 1944) on which McGill (*Emu*, 45, p. 89) found two specimens of the Wandering Albatross on the beach at Bate Bay, Cronulla, New South Wales. Since dead albatrosses are rarely found along beaches and no storms passed through the New Caledonia area or along the south-east coast of Australia during the weeks preceding these observations, the finding of such large oceanic birds along the beaches of the Coral and Tasman Seas suggests that factors other than violent weather caused their deaths. Through personal observations over several years in the Pacific, I believe that many of these bird casualties were the result of indiscriminate shooting by a few of the immense numbers of armed men who reached that region during the recent war.—DWAIN W. WARNER, University of Minnesota Museum of Natural History, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A., 25/10/47.

**Australian Birds on Animate Perches.**—Species of birds in Australia which occasionally make use of some of the larger mammals as perches do so for differing reasons—to obtain external parasites from them, or to secure insects, disturbed on the ground or among vegetation, by the animals being used as perches. Willie Wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) make use of sheep, cattle and horses for these reasons. Magpie-Larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) have been

reported by L. LeSouëf (*S.A. Orn.*, 8, 104, 1925) to perch on bullocks and cattle, and feed on ticks, in north-western Australia. Australian Crows (*Corvus cecilæ*) sometimes perch on sheep and cattle, whilst the imported Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) often perches on sheep.

Some birds, however, perch on animals to obtain hair, or fur, or wool for lining their nests. The following may be cited as examples: Willie Wagtail on sheep, cattle and horses; Black-chinned Honeyeater (*Melithreptus gularis*) on cattle; Brown-headed Honeyeater (*M. brevirostris*) on cattle and Koala (*Phascolarctus cinereus*); White-eared Honeyeater (*Meliphaga leucotis*) on cattle, horses and human beings; and Starling on sheep.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 6/10/47.

## Reviews

**Vernaculars.**—The discussion by Ludlow Griscom, in *The Wilson Bulletin*, vol. 59, no. 3, p. 131—'Common Sense in Common Names'—is illustrative of difficulties, and very entertaining. It includes an attack on the psychosis that scientific names are too much for the amateur. If we are to revise vernacular names, as suggested elsewhere in this issue, we might give some consideration to abandoning some inappropriate and conflicting vernaculars in favour of scientific names used as common names. Who objects to Pitta, for example? In any case there is a lot to be said for the 'tag' of the late Dr. J. A. Leach that a name once given becomes merely a label—"Mr. Long is not necessarily a tall man."—C.E.B.

**Cuckoo's and Fosterer's Young reared Together.**—An instance where the young of a Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) was reared without causing the destruction of the fosterer's own young, is reported in *British Birds*, vol. 40, May 1947, p. 149, by R. E. Burton. The fosterer was a Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and the young Cuckoo was witnessed vainly attempting to tip one of the young Robins out of the nest. After losing its eviction urge it remained in the nest, but apparently dominating its companions, as it was fledged after the normal period of 20 days. The young Robins, however, of which there were four, were fledged 23 days after hatching, in contrast to the normal period of 12-14 or 15 days.—D.L.S.

**Birds dropping Shellfish.**—A paper entitled 'Deposits of Shells transported by Birds,' by C. Teichert and D. L. Serventy, *Amer. Journ. of Science*, vol. 245, May 1947, pp. 322-8, deals with shell deposits by sea-birds, chiefly, possibly exclusively, *Gabianus pacificus*. Records along southern Australian coasts of broken shells and opercula of mainly *Turbo* deal with often extensive deposits, even large enough to be mistaken for marine shell beds. Considering the quantity of material, the paucity of recorded observations of the birds in action is surprising.—C.E.B.

**W.A. Gould League Notes.**—The 1947-48 issue, under the title of 'Bird Study for Bird Lovers,' is designed to attract younger folk while having sufficient substance to interest adults. R.A.O.U. members are well to the fore as the principal contributors, but there are many shorter notes from school-children and members of bird-clubs that reflect the dual aspect of interest and desire to express it.—C.E.B.

**Blue-breasted Wren in S.A.**—Under this title C. E. Rix (*S.A. Orn.*, vol. 18, pt. 6, July (Sep.) 1947, p. 52) substantiates his and J. W. Mellor's previous records of *Malurus pulcherrimus* on Eyre Peninsula.