

Mack rejected Mellor's skins as being *pulcherrimus* and referred them to *assimilis*. In 1946 Rix collected a further specimen and confirmed the association with *pulcherrimus*. The species appears to inhabit the southern part of the peninsula, which has climatic and vegetation characteristics different from the lower rainfall northern portion. The blue-violet throat and breast in *pulcherrimus* are said to be diagnostic.

The establishment of the species extends the range considerably to the east. The author points out that Eyre Peninsula is the eastern limit of other Western Australian species, such as *Eopsaltria griseogularis* and *Colluricincla rufiventris*, to which might be added *Climacteris rufa*.—C.E.B.

News and Notes

R.A.O.U. MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 8 p.m. on February 18, 1948, at the lecture hall, Public Library, Melbourne, when Mr. N. J. Favalaro will give an address on the food of birds.

R.A.O.U. CONFERENCE AND CAMP-OUT, 1948

The annual interstate conference and Camp-out will be held this year in Western Australia, for the first time since 1927. It is proposed that after the business meetings in Perth, the Camp-out be held in the Sharks Bay region, the centre of much interesting ornithological work in the past, from that of the celebrated French expeditions of the early part of the last century to the more recent investigations of Tom Carter and F. Lawson Whitlock. The date has not yet been finally fixed, but it will be earlier in the year than is usual for R.A.O.U. conferences—probably in September. Western Australian members headed by the President (Dr. D. L. Serventy), in association with various government departments, hope that this conference and Camp-out will stand out as a memorable one. Prospective participants from the other States are required to communicate with the Hon. General Secretary or State Secretary for Western Australia.

Correspondence

To the Editor,
Sir—

I should like to make the following comments on two matters in the July 1947 issue of *The Emu*.

1. The Possibility of Another New Australian Parrot, as described in Mr. A. J. Marshall's article. I should like to be bold enough to suggest that the black and red parrot (or cockatoo) of McLennan, MacGillivray and Marshall will eventually prove to be Pesquet's Parrot (*Psittrichas fulgidus*, formerly *Dasyptilus pesqueti*), a New Guinea bird which has been known for over a century. Specimens of this bird have been exhibited in the Taronga Park Zoo, Sydney, for the last ten or twelve years, and when I last visited Sydney, in June 1946, a fine pair was still on exhibition. An excellent coloured plate of this bird, by Roland

Green, appeared in the *Avicultural Magazine* for July 1936. I feel that Marshall's suggestion that the bird he saw is a Black Lory or near relation thereof must be discounted for two reasons. First, the veriest tyro, which Marshall obviously is not, would be unlikely to mistake a lory or lorikeet for any cockatoo, especially if he saw it in flight, and secondly, no known lory is large enough to be mistaken for a black cockatoo.

2. The Probable Nesting Records of the Chestnut Quilled Rock-Pigeon described by C. F. Humphries. The description of "a pigeon with large red wattles" does not to my mind suggest the above-mentioned bird; I should say that the bird in question was almost certainly the Partridge Pigeon (*Geophaps smithii*), in which the naked red skin around the eye is a prominent feature. While on the subject of the Chestnut Quilled Rock-Pigeon, it is probably not generally known that a dozen of these birds were received at the Adelaide Zoo in 1913 and were exhibited there for many years thereafter. The records show that three young birds of this species were bred in 1916 and two more in 1917, and the late R. R. Minchin informed me that he believed that they bred annually for some years before the flock eventually died out. I can remember the birds distinctly and my most vivid impression is of the slim, stream-lined shape of the birds: they certainly did not give an idea of unusually large size, as Humphries mentions.

Yours, etc.,

ALAN LENDON.

North Adelaide, S.A., 17/9/47.

THE GENUS *Calidris* IN AUSTRALIA

To the Editor,

Sir—

Further to Mr. A. R. McGill's valuable contribution in this journal (*Emu*, vol. 47, part 2, pp. 137-146), I should like to submit the following additional records which should not be overlooked.

Calidris canutus, Knot.

- (a) 1912—a male in non-breeding plumage, taken at Melville or Buchanan Islands, N.T., on March 28, was in the collection of the late Edwin Ashby, of Blackwood, S.A. It was probably destroyed by fire in 1935.
- (b) 1917—recorded from Wentworth, N.S.W., by Drs. A. Chenery and A. M. Morgan.
- (c) 1926—a male was collected at Lake Albert, Meningie, S.A., by F. E. Parsons on December 4. This was a new record for South Australia, and the specimen is now in the South Australian Museum.

- (d) 1931—25 birds were observed at Ewe Island, Murray Mouth, S.A., by the late J. Sutton in May; one bird in full breeding plumage.

Calidris tenuirostris, Great Knot.

- (a) 1871—a specimen, presumably taken in the Northern Territory, was forwarded from South Australia in March by F. G. Waterhouse to John Gould.
- (b) 1912—male and female in non-breeding plumage from Melville or Buchanan Islands, N.T., in the Ashby Collection, since destroyed. Dates taken: male 19/4/1912; female 30/3/1912.

The Knot taken by Parsons in 1926 was a single bird in a small company of waders comprising Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Erolia acuminata*) and Little Stints (*E. ruficollis*) and one Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*). The Great Knot has not been recorded from South Australia.

Yours etc.,

H. T. CONDON.

Adelaide, S.A., 8/10/1947.

HORSFIELD BUSH-LARK

To the Editor,

Sir—

In 'Notes on the Horsfield Bush-Lark (*Mirafra javanica*),' Mr. P. A. Bourke gives a useful twenty-four-hour diagram of the song of this species (*The Emu*, vol. 47, 1947, p. 5). The diurnal curve appears to conform fairly closely to the basic pattern of bird song, with an evening peak in a modified form. An interesting feature is the gradual falling away from the evening peak, through the night, to a low point before sunrise.

A helpful addition to such a diagram is a statement of the total output of song for the day, for comparison with other totals. It appears from the diagram that the total mean output of song for the twenty-four hours was in the region of two hours of output. This may be compared with published records made on another member of the family Alaudidae, the well-known Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) in England. Three all-day records which I made in April, May and July (*British Birds*, vol. 37, p. 87) gave outputs of 69, 47 and 181 minutes respectively. These are the actual amounts sung by a single bird on a single day. It will be seen that the output of song of the Horsfield Bush-Lark falls within the limits so far recorded for the Skylark. Such figures are scarce in literature at present. Mrs. Nice (*Trans. Linn. Soc. N.Y.*, vol. 6, p. 122), in her study of the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), gives 2305 songs in a day and quotes Stoddard (*The Bobwhite Quail*, Scribners) as

having counted 1430 Bob-white (*Colinus virginianus*) calls from one bird in a day. If the song of the Song Sparrow is taken as $2\frac{1}{2}$ seconds and the call of the Bob-white as rather under one second (Brand with his photo-recording gives 0.82 seconds for a Bob-white call, *The Auk*, vol. 52, p. 44), then outputs of 96 and 20 minutes respectively are obtained. These latter are approximations; as naturally only the observers could give the exact computation for a particular individual. The largest output I have to date is of a Song Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*), which sang in the Station at Glanton, with an output of 377 minutes (*British Birds*, vol. 38, p. 264).

There is one point which I would like to mention, which may help towards standardization of observation. The diagram of the Bush-Lark song is on an hourly basis, which is the most useful for all-day recording. The hourly totals are, however, given from one hour to the next, e.g. the amount of song is shown between the hours of 7 and 8. This song is therefore not representative of either the hour 7 or 8, but of an hour around 7.30. The point may seem a small one, but previously-published diagrams of all-day singing have been based around the hour and not around the half-hour. The trouble is that the two types of diagram cannot be directly compared. It would seem better to standardize on the round the hour method originally used, which is also probably the better one for reference.

To recapitulate this latter point with the example of the hours 7 and 8—it is suggested that in any future diagrams these should be worked out and shown diagrammatically from 6.30 to 7.30 and from 7.30 to 8.30 (not from 6 to 7 and 7 to 8), and that the rest of the diagram should be on a similar basis.

Yours, etc.,

NOBLE ROLLIN.

Bird Research and Educational Station,
Glanton, Northumberland, England,
November 11, 1947.

THE ORDER CHARADRIIFORMES

To the Editor,

Sir—

In the review in *The Emu*, vol. 46, 1947, 395-396, of T. M. Blackman's *Birds of the Central Pacific Ocean*, 1944, the reviewer* remarked: 'It is noted that the terns are listed under the Order Charadriiformes: a new departure in classification, or an error. Which?'

*In fairness to the reviewer it must be recorded that he later communicated to the Editor his realization of previous instances of such a classification, but, by arrangement, it was not published when no-one raised any query during the following three months or so.—Ed.

In 1922, in his paper (*The Ibis*, 475-495) 'On the Significance of certain Characters in some Charadriine genera, with a provisional classification of the Order Charadriiformes,' Dr. P. R. Lowe placed the gulls and terns in a sub-order of the Order Charadriiformes. In 1934 Dr. Alexander Wetmore, in 'A Systematic Classification for the Birds of the World Revised and Amended' (*Smithsonian Miscell. Coll.*, vol. 89), accepted Dr. Lowe's classification and placed the gulls and terns similarly. J. L. Peters, in his *Check-list of the Birds of the World*, now in course of publication, also accepts the above classification.

The affinity of these groups with the Charadriiformes was stated by W. P. Pycraft in *A History of Birds*, 1910, 55.

So the listing of the terns under the Order Charadriiformes is certainly not 'a new departure.'

Yours, etc.,

H. M. WHITTELL.

Bridgetown, W.A., September 11, 1947.

VERNACULAR NAMES OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

To the Editor,

Sir—

In the July *Auk* there is printed a letter from the British ornithologists, B. W. Tucker and David Lack, suggesting that a joint committee of British and American ornithologists should be formed to decide on vernacular names for birds which appear in both the British and the American Checklists. These names do not always agree. For example, *Podiceps auritus* bears in the American list the name Horned Grebe, whilst in the British list it occurs as the Slavonian Grebe.

Among other suggestions they put forward are—

1. English names should not be regarded as rigidly fixed.
2. Popular usage must be the ultimate criterion, and the deliberate creation of new vernacular names which have no popular support should be reduced to a minimum.
3. Every species should have a comprehensive name used for all races of that species.
4. English names for subspecies should be abandoned, except, perhaps for extremely distinct subspecies, particularly where the name came into existence before the modern subspecies concept. The Western Australian 'Twenty-eight' parrot would be an example.
5. Brevity in vernacular names is desirable.

In this connection, in my opinion, Australian ornithologists have two tasks before them. The first is to revise the vernacular names used in the second edition (1926) of the

Checklist, and the other to endeavour to bring about uniformity in the vernacular names of birds which have a range unconfined to Australia. This latter point was commented on by me when reviewing Dr. Mayr's *Birds of the Southwest Pacific* in *The Emu* in 1945 (July).

Unfortunately the vernacular names used in that work are beginning to appear in the pages of *The Emu*, to the confusion of readers. Thus, in the April 1947 issue, the Grey Goshawk is listed as the Rufous-breasted Hawk, the Red-backed Sea-Eagle as the White-and-red Eagle-Kite, whilst the Papuan Cuckoo-Shrike appears as the White-bellied Graybird. The Australian Shining Starling appears as the Colonial Starling, not only in the April 1946 *Emu*, but also in the issue of January 1947. In volume 46, 1947, page 311, I used, for *Nettapus coromandelianus* the name 'Indian Cotton Teal,' that being the accepted name in India where it is a common resident species and the source of the type-specimen. On the same page Dr. Mayr used the taxonomically more correct name of 'Indian Pygmy-Goose,' whilst in the following volume (p. 61) Mr. Jack Jones used the current *Checklist* name 'White-quilled Pygmy-Goose.' This 'Teal' or 'Pygmy-Goose' illustrates nicely the points mentioned by Messrs. Tucker and Lack. 'White-quilled Pygmy-Goose' is a deliberate creation of a vernacular name which has no popular support and it does not comply with popular usage.

The Checklist Committee is sufficiently occupied with the task of studying taxonomic and scientific nomenclatural papers which have appeared since the last edition of the *Checklist* was issued twenty-one years ago. I suggest that a subsidiary committee be set up to standardize vernacular names for birds having a range in and outside Australia. At the same time the committee might revise the names of some purely Australian species. For species appearing in the British and American lists, the committee could accept the decisions arrived at by the Committee adumbrated by Messrs. Tucker and Lack, and it could consult the A.O.U. regarding vernacular names of species entering the Pacific area. It would have been advisable to consult Indian ornithologists for species occurring also in that country, but now there is a change in the form of government, that may not be necessary, as the *lingua franca* of that country will probably not be English.

Yours, etc.,

H. M. WHITTELL.

Bridgetown, W.A., September 5, 1947.