

The nest was completed and the first egg laid on the night of August 30. The second egg was deposited the next night and the third the following night. Exactly one week after the first egg was deposited, one egg disappeared. I suspected rats, so I laid flour across the rafter on each side of the nest. However, a second egg went the next night and no tell-tale rat prints were found on the flour. The third and last egg remained for two days, when it also disappeared. At this stage I began to suspect the birds as I could find no trace of the eggs broken or otherwise. My suspicions were confirmed when I later saw the birds pulling the nest to pieces. I think that I may have been the unwitting cause of the egg removals as I had handled them with paraffin-soaked fingers.

The Wagtails next built in a peppercorn tree about fifty yards distant from their original nest. Unfortunately I did not notice this nest until I found a shattered egg directly under it. It was up about thirty feet in the tree and it was also subsequently pulled to pieces by the birds.

Once again I had a serious observational lapse and no record was kept of the Wagtails' actions, until an unusual amount of excreta, underneath a gum tree some thirty yards from the pepper tree, indicated a bird 'camp' up above. I found it to be the erstwhile Wagtails', complete with a clutch of three healthy fledgelings. This time the nest was at least fifty feet up, not a rare occurrence, but unusual. This brood all lived to 'tell the tale.'

I repeat—Do birds learn quickly by experience?—R. H. BOUGHTWOOD, South Liverpool, N.S.W., 2/3/48.

**Eggs of the Spinifex or Night Parrot.**—In *A Supplement of the Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands*, July 15, 1936, p. 56, I gave all the information I then possessed about this bird. Now through my friend Mr. W. E. Clegg I am able to give some account of eggs laid in captivity in 1862. The three eggs have the scientific name written on them and '15a. [and 15b. and 15c.] C.G.P. 1862', and measure 25.2 by 20 mm., 25 by 19.2, and 25.5 by 19.5. The eggs are from the Henry Munt collection which passed to the Rothschild museum when Munt died. Munt was a most reliable man. He collected only white eggs.

*Eggs.* Clutch 3 or 4? White, slight gloss, oval, 25 mm. to 25.5 by 19.2 by 20. Average 25.2 by 19.6.—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Winchester, Eng., 22/11/47.

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## Obituary

### ARTHUR CHENERY

Dr. Chenery, an original member of the Union, and its president in 1930-31, died at his daughter's home in St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, on June 6, 1948, aged nearly 79.

He was born at Delatite Station, Mansfield, Victoria, in November 1869. He commenced his medical course at the Melbourne University and completed it at King's College Hospital, London, with the degrees of M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P.

At the age of 33 he married Florence Eve Turner at Crystal Brook, South Australia: his wife predeceased him, dying in 1940. There were three daughters and one son born of the marriage.

Dr. Chenery practised in various country centres until 1944, first at Port Augusta—there is a paper in volume 2 of *The Emu* with a list of birds on a trip from there to Yardea Telegraph Station in the Gawler Ranges—then at Sale, Tocumwal and Wentworth. He was in practice at this last place for 28 years, retiring at last on account of ill-health, and thereafter residing with his daughters—at Kerang, Perth, and finally Melbourne with his daughter Patricia Marie, the wife of Dr. E. Harvey Barrett, who supplied this detail.

Dr. Chenery wrote little for *The Emu*, and was quiet and unassuming in his ways, like so many of the older bird-men. To see and know him was to realize that here was another of those 'gentle men' who have found contentment and riches in their associations with nature.—C.E.B.

## Reviews

**Crows of Australia and New Guinea.**—During the 1914-18 war Dr. Erwin Stresemann published a revision of the thick-billed crows of the Indo-Australian region, in which he considered all the populations of the birds concerned as constituting a single *Formenkreis*. More recently he published another review ('Die Gattung *Corvus* in Australien und Neuguinea', *Journal für Ornithologie*, 91 (1), 121-135, Jan. 1943), dealing particularly with the forms occurring in Australia and New Guinea. The following five species are now recognized by him—*C. coronoides*, *C. bennetti*, *C. orru*, *C. macrorhynchus*, and *C. philippinus*. Stresemann further regards *C. validus* as an offshoot from *C. orru* which has reached specific status.

The Australian and New Guinea forms are placed under two super-species, namely *coronoides* and *orru*. *C. bennetti* and *C. ceciliae* he considers distinct, noting, however, that both Mathews and Campbell believe intergradation occurs between these species in northern Australia. The form *ceciliae* is regarded as a subspecies of *orru*, to which it is linked by the race *salvadorii* Finsch of south-east New Guinea. The species *coronoides* is divided into three races. The author evidently has not seen recent Australian work on the eye-colour of the species.

One skin from Queensland presented great difficulties as it does not agree with any of the three familiar Australian forms of crows. Stresemann tentatively regards it as a new species, describing and naming it *Corvus difficilis*. It was taken at Malbon, Malbon River, Cloncurry district, by Dr. G. Neuhauser, on February 27, 1938. ♂ adult, in Zool. Museum Berlin. "Diagnosis: Most nearly allied to *C. coronoides*, but differing from it (1) in the very small bill, which is not larger than in *C. bennetti*; (2) in the very pale feather-bases, which are whitish-grey on the back and abdomen, and dirty-white on the chest and neck. Hackles short (to 25 mm.), lanceolate, not forked. The bird is at the end of the moult of the large feathers, and is at least 1½ years old. Dimensions: Wing 345, culmen 45, tail 189, tarsus