

Description of the Nest of the Cattle Egret

The nests of the Cattle Egret were smaller than those of the White Egret and were more concave and built of finer materials than those of that species.

A typical nest was composed of thin branched *Melaleuca* twigs and sticks, the slightly concave egg platform being lined with finer twigs, together with a small number of dried *Casuarina* needles. In some nests were twigs of the swamp box (*Tristania suaveolens*) and of gum trees (*Eucalyptus* sp.). Average dimensions were—diameter 13 inches, thickness 5 inches. Nests were firmly supported in all instances, either by a flat fork and its associated twigs, or by short upright leafy branches. In all cases the main supporting branch was short and slender.

Description of the Eggs of the Cattle Egret

Clutch from three to six, varying from oval to rounded oval and of the true heron type. Colour, white with a delicate bluish tinge, the surface being smooth and slightly lustrous but when examined with a lens shown to be minutely indented with shallow pittings. On some eggs irregular patches of lime occur. A clutch of six eggs measures (A) 48 mm. x 33 mm., (B) 50 mm. x 34 mm., (C) 49 mm. x 34 mm., (D) 48 mm. x 35 mm., (E) 47 mm. x 33 mm., (F) 49 mm. x 34 mm.

The foregoing occurrence of the Cattle Egret in New South Wales is of particular interest in view of the recent occurrence of the species in mainland North America, possibly from birds first introduced into South America some twenty-odd years ago. An interesting article on the species in the Americas was published in the *National Geographic Magazine* for August 1954.

The Portland Adelie Penguin

By NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Vic.

The Adelie Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) found in Portland Bay early in July 1933 and recorded in *The Emu*, vol. 55, p. 100, has raised some interest. Mr. Keith Hindwood writes—

Serventy (*Emu*, vol. 47, p. 256) mentions the occurrence of the Adelie Penguin near Perth, March 1937. This occurrence was recorded in *Emu*, vol. 37, p. 65, by H. M. Whittell, who assumed (or rather the Superintendent of the Perth Zoo did) that it had been brought to Fremantle by a ship of the Japanese whaling fleet which had lately passed through on its way north. Possibly two separate birds are included in the above record(s). Whittell mentions Cottesloe Beach and the date the bird was seen by him in the Zoo as April 18, whereas Serventy's bird came from near the City Beach in March 1937. . . . If it could be ascertained whether any ships from down south were in Australian waters during July 1933 one would have a possible clue to the Portland occurrence, which is a remarkable one if the bird was unassisted. Serventy rejected the W.A. records from the Australian list on the score of probable assisted passage.

On the receipt of the above I set out to trace Antarctic ships in southern Australian waters during May, June and July 1933.

1. The shipping records here (Portland) contain no such records.

2. The Collector of Customs, Melbourne, said—

This department has no record of any ship arriving at Melbourne from the Antarctic during May, June and July 1933.

3. The Collector of Customs, Adelaide, wrote—

You are advised that records held at this Port disclose that no vessel reported from the Antarctic during May-July 1933.

4. The Collector of Customs, Hobart, wrote—

A perusal of this Department's inward shipping register for the months in question revealed that no ships arrived from the Antarctic, in fact none arrived during the entire year 1933.

So the reports from all these southern shipping cities seem to make it clear that the 'assisted passage' obstacle can be ruled out.

Here is another angle to the problem. There is a definite connection between sou'-west gales and the finding of storm-washed birds on the Portland beaches. So I wrote to the Director of Meteorology for the weather reports in May, June and July 1933. Mr. L. J. Dwyer replied—

The position here is that records of the beginning of winter 1933 do not extend beyond the Australian coastline. Shipping reports were not common in those days . . . and would be well north of the normal habitat of Adelie Penguins. Sea water temperatures well south of fifty degrees and the position of the pack ice boundaries would, if the ice were further north than usual and the water temperatures abnormally low, encourage the bird to swim further north in search of food. In this respect no information is held here, and it is unlikely that any ships were in the region at the time. In regard to odd occurrences, Admiralty Charts show that in 1908 an iceberg was sighted some 150 miles west of Cape Leeuwin, so that the appearance of an Adelie Penguin at Portland should not be considered an impossibility.

It only remains to be stated that the latitude of Cape Leeuwin is nearly 300 miles north of Portland, and there does not seem to be any evidence to show that the bird identified by Prof. Wood Jones was not a genuine Australian record of an Antarctic resident.

Tree-Ducks on the Murray.—A flock of twenty-eight Plumed Whistling Tree-Ducks arrived on the bank of the Murray at Beverford on October 1, 1955. They have dispersed gradually and appear to be pairing. At present (October 30, 1955) only six remain and have become quite tame. Old local residents have not seen them hereabouts before.—DERECK FRENCH, Beverford, Vic., 30/10/55.