

tailed Eagles by the use of a rabbit trap using live roosters as a lure. It was stated that 252 Eagles had been caught in 52 days by this method. The matter was referred to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for investigation. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is on the pest list in Queensland and can be destroyed with impunity.

The existence of a Naturalists Club in Rockhampton was, through an oversight, not commented upon in that part of last year's Report dealing with the activities of Naturalists Clubs in Queensland. The Brisbane Bird Observers Club is still finding plenty to do in the Brisbane area. One result of its activities over the years is a growing list of many 'inland' birds occurring on the coast. In response to an appeal by Dr. Allen Keast for information regarding the autumn and winter nesting of birds, many interesting notes were sent in by city and country members. It is hoped that this subject will continue to interest our Queensland members. Some interest has also been shown on the subject of bird banding and the recovery of beach-washed sea-birds.

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Branch Secretary

A 'Blue' Lowry

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The Crimson Rosella or Red Lowry (*Platycercus elegans*), like all other animal species, occasionally produces pink-eyed albinos which are exquisitely-plumaged birds, the red areas of normal individuals being retained with all other parts reduced to white owing to the absence of melanin pigments. I have not seen a young albino, but judging from mutants of the Adelaide Rosella (*Platycercus elegans adalaidae*), it is likely that such would show an additional colour—yellow—in the parts which are green in normal birds of the season. Green coloration in Psittacidae is due to the 'filter effect' of yellow carotenoid pigment on the underlying Tyndall blue (see Auber, L., 1957, *Proc. Zool. Soc., London*, 129, p. 458). Blue coloration (e.g. cheeks and rectrices in *Platycercus* spp.) is a non-iridescent effect based on feather structures. Various shades of blue can be produced by the addition or mixing of longer wave lengths of light which are usually absorbed by underlying 'purifying' melanin necessary for the appearance of Tyndall blue.

The complete loss of carotenoid pigments which produce red and yellow coloration seems to be rare in birds. Through the kindness of Mr. W. B. Hitchcock I have had the opportunity to examine a 'blue' lowry which was collected by Mr. K. McCole at East Buchan, Victoria on May 16, 1958, and

forwarded by Mr. Chris Hodge. The bird is thought to have been a young male, and the white wing bar indicates its immaturity. It was observed with a flock of normal birds. There is no trace of red in the plumage. Areas which are blue or blackish in normal birds are unchanged—cheeks, primaries, rectrices and some of the wing coverts. Feathers of the back, which are black with green edgings ('scalloped' effect) in normal young, are black with blue margins. Those areas which normally show crimson in the young of *elegans* are dirty white or pale grey; they are the crown, face and margins of the cheeks, breast, abdomen, and under tail coverts.

The specimen is of importance because it shows clearly that (1) the yellow carotenoid pigments of young birds are replaced by red in the adults, (2) the nature and origin of red and yellow pigments is similar (3) with the assumption of red the amount of melanin deposited is reduced and perhaps the structure of the feathers themselves is slightly altered, (4) the 'filter effect' of yellow on the underlying blue structural colour is responsible for the production of green, (5) the basis of the various colour forms of *elegans* as recognized by Cain (1955, *Ibis*, 97, p. 474), but including also North's *melanoptera*, from Kangaroo Island, is a simple genetical one and the same might be said of the colour differences between the related species of *Platycercus*, (6) differences in shades of green of normal young birds (e.g. on rump, abdomen, etc.) are controlled by the nature of the underlying melanin and not by the intensity of the yellow.

Without doubt, had the bird lived, the plumage would have become progressively paler with age and the fully-adult stage can be imagined as being pale grey or dirty white in all those parts normally red, with blue cheeks, a black 'spotted effect' on the back, and normal dark wings and tail. Probably this mutation is most attractive in the young stage and one can imagine an enthusiastic 'psitticulturalist' watching with dismay his beautiful blue lowry slowly fading to a dingy white! Further observations and breeding experiments are necessary to show whether the change is sex-linked.

In connection with the green coloration in parrots generally it is of interest to mention that in an investigation made by the writer, for the police, of several specimens of *Barnardius* found at the scene of a murder, racial diagnosis was possible on the basis of the intensity of the yellow pigment in the barbules of a small contour feather from the shoulder region. Interior birds ('paler or brighter green') had more yellowish barbules; soiled barbules of this race, showing less yellow, produced a darker green feather. It was possible to indicate the area from which the submitted material must have come, thereby once again justifying the 'study of trinomials'!