

Besides being in "a country of dense bushes and tame birds," where the temperature ranged from 110° to 115° in the shade during the warm portions of the day, and having surroundings only of thorny acacia bushes and sand, there were many difficulties beyond sandstorms of several varieties to overcome. One was the way in which birds worked against the collector, by some common one alarming the rarer kinds; another was their skill in hiding. The author says:—

"The birds living among the trees depended upon the thickness of the branches and twigs for concealment, and although there were few trees with leaves, it was extraordinary how perfect a protection they were afforded. Even the most brightly coloured birds were hidden in a thick mimosa bush or acacia tree, and rather than fly away would retire into the thickest part of a tree. . . . I heard a shrill note coming from the middle of a bush which was composed of thin and wiry green shoots, leafless, but so interlaced that the birds were perfectly hidden. I kicked the bush, but the birds would not budge. I walked all round it several times, but the birds only travelled round to the opposite side."

One needs to be an enthusiast in such a quest as Mr. Witherby had. An extract from his book will show not only that he has written in a popular rather than a scientific style, but that his heart was in his work. It will also perhaps induce the reader to do what is worth doing, peruse the book for himself:—

"On one of our last evenings of camp life I was trying to shoot some small bats that were flitting round the tents. . . . As I was standing there a hawk-like bird appeared like a ghost from over the river. As it passed me I raised my gun mechanically and fired, but the bird went on and in ten yards or so was out of sight. I thought no more about it, as my gun was loaded with dust shot, and the bird seemed large and some distance off. Tiring at length of shooting by moonlight, I returned to the camp, and, calling for a lantern, went to search for the bat at the place I had marked with a heap of mud. As the light flashed on the spot, there lying dead with outspread wings was the glorious golden Goatsucker. I picked it up and rushed madly to my companions. . . . I often dream of a broad river flowing through a desert land lit by the bright moon; of a ghost-like form and a chance shot; then I see a stately Arab bearing a lantern, and suddenly the light flashes upon a glorious bird shining like burnished gold all spread out upon the sand."

Report on Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) Rookeries, Phillip Island.*

Melbourne, 11th April, 1902.

To the Council, Australasian Ornithologists' Union.

I BEG to report that on the 29th, 30th, and 31st March, accompanied by Messrs. A. P. and J. F. Smith, who have been acquainted with the locality from childhood, I visited and

* In view of members of the next Congress of the Aust. O.U. visiting the rookeries on Phillip Island during the egg season in November, and thereafter to formulate some scheme for the protection of Mutton-Birds, not only on that island but in other localities in Bass Strait, &c., if necessary, it occurred to the Council it would be as well to possess some evidence as to the state of the rookeries during the "birdling"

inspected six of the seven Mutton-Bird rookeries on Phillip Island.

The rookery not inspected was the large one on Cape Wollomai. Its condition and extent are well known. Moreover, it is probable that the Council of the Aust. O.U. will officially visit the locality next November, when the numerous egggers will be at work. The remaining rookeries visited (commencing next to Wollomai and following round the island) were :—

(1.) *The Narrows Rookery*.—This rookery is about half a mile in extent, and is situated on the sand dunes on the Back Beach, the burrows being chiefly on the tops and on the inland sides of the dunes. The locality was full of young birds in a thriving condition. Judging by those examined they would be ready to take the sea in about a fortnight or three weeks. Some parts of the rookery are scrub-covered, other portions have coarse grass.

(2.) *Murray's Rookery* is near the Narrows, a little further to the westward. It is about a quarter of a mile in length, and is more open than the Narrows, nevertheless birds were found fairly numerous. Both Murray's and the Narrows may be said to be in good order.

(3.) *Red Cliff Rookery*.—This place, being on the top of a naked bluff, is somewhat exposed, and is situated about half-way between Murray's and the Nobby. There were formerly about two acres of burrows, now mostly deserted. Only a few nests contained young. Owing to the shallowness of the burrows and easy access to the locality (only six miles by a good road from the township of Cowes) this rookery has evidently been much depleted by egg-gatherers and birding parties.

(4.) *Nobby Rookery*.—This is a small rookery on the summit of an islet at the south-west end of Phillip Island, and is almost depleted of Mutton-Birds. The burrows being very shallow, the eggs or young are easily taken. I noticed only two or three young in their nests, while a carcass of one recently killed, evidently by a cat, was lying in the open.

(5.) *Flynn's Rookery* is situated near the Inner Beach, on the sand dunes, between a small lagoon and the strand. Its extent is about a quarter of a mile. Birds were numerous, being well protected in deep burrows under a secure covert of rushes, "sword grass," bracken, and other coarse vegetation.

(6.) *M'Haffie's Rookery* is similar in size and extent to Flynn's and is situated about half a mile further eastward. This rookery is also in an apparently flourishing condition, well covered with

season. Consequently, Messrs. A. J. Campbell and Robert Hall were deputed to visit, during the autumn, some of the rookeries when the young were in the burrows, and to report accordingly. At the last moment Mr. Hall was unable to proceed.—
A. J. C.

scrub—leptospermum, acacia, "blue bush," &c., besides grass, &c.

From the foregoing remarks it will be noticed that all the rookeries are in good and natural condition except the small ones on Red Cliff and the Nobby respectively. Although the season was ripe for birding parties for oil, food, &c., I did not hear of any being at work. The chief traffic in connection with the birds is evidently during egg-gathering season. The idea of registering names and addresses of egg-gatherers might be tried as an experiment the ensuing season. No doubt Mr. C. W. Maclean, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, who administers the *Game Act* (and to whom I have forwarded a similar report to this), will take action in the matter, and cause some arrangements to be made for taking the census of egg-gatherers, with a view of ascertaining, and, if necessary, regulating the traffic.*

I cannot close this report without expressing my indebtedness to the brothers Smith for their very willing assistance to me while inspecting the various rookeries.—ARCHD. J. CAMPBELL.

Better Protection for Victorian Birds.

"HISTORY repeats itself." Some years ago the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria bestirred itself in the matter of the better protection of our useful and ornamental indigenous birds.† The Commissioner of the day, who administered the *Game Act*, was interviewed by deputation, with the result that the schedule of protected birds was considerably augmented, and took nearly its present form.

With the experience of 17 years, and some of the species still decreasing in number, the Club has moved again, appointing as a sub-committee Messrs. G. A. Keartland, D. Le Souëf, and Robert Hall—by the way, all members of the Aust. O.U.—to bring up recommendations. Judging by the report (*vide Naturalist*, pp. 5-7, May, 1902) the sub-committee must have worked most assiduously, especially Mr. Keartland, upon whom devolved all the secretarial work.

The following are the amendments proposed to close seasons on the present schedule:—

* Mr. Maclean has already moved in the matter, and upon his recommendation the Minister of Public Works by proclamation will close the Red Cliff and Nobby rookeries for four years from September next. Notice boards to that effect will be erected at the landing and other places on the island. Notices will also be posted requiring egg-gatherers to the "open" rookeries to register their names and addresses. Mr. A. P. Smith, Cowes, has been appointed an Assistant Inspector under the Act to see these regulations carried out locally.—A. J. C.

† See "The Protection of Our Native Birds," *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. i., p. 161 (Feb., 1885), and *Southern Science Record*, vol. i. (New Series), p. 57 (March, 1885).