

narrowly; under surface of tail feathers ash-coloured, with distinct transverse bars of a deeper colour; beak, legs, and feet black; irides dull brown. Flesh measurements—length, 3.6; wing, 2.3; tail, 1.8; tarsus, .7; culmen, .45 inches.

There is little difference between the sexes in appearance, except, perhaps, that the female has a shorter bill and narrow greyish-white edgings to one or two of the tail feathers.

Types.—In the Western Australian Museum, Perth.

I beg to distinguish the new species by the scientific name of *Acanthiza pallida*, and by the vernacular one of "Pallid Tit."

Stray Feathers.

SWALLOWS ON 'CHANGE.—Last week a pair of Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) suddenly appeared in the city and took up their abode under the verandah of the Launceston Stock Exchange. Every summer a pair nests under this verandah. Woe betide anyone who attempts to molest the birds on their nest; the members of the 'Change are very jealous of their little feathered friends.—FRANK M. LITTLER. Launceston, 23/6/03.

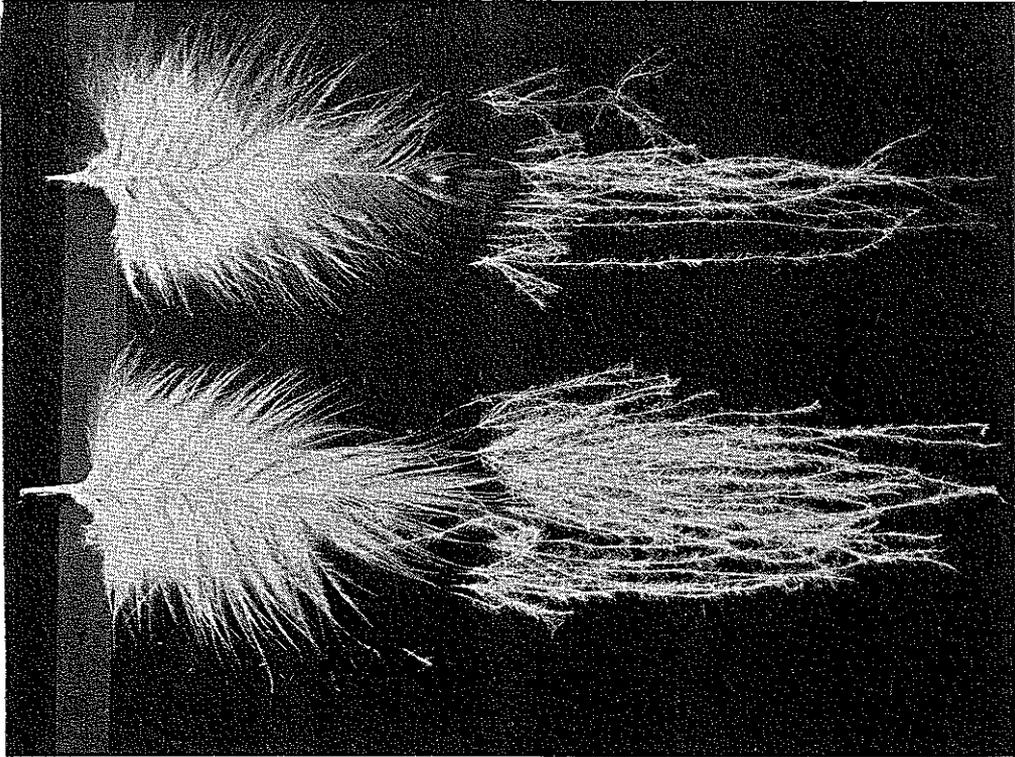
[*Re* this bird an interesting note is given by Mr. T. Carter, in his "North-West Notes" in this issue.—EDS.]

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HOMESTEAD NOTES (NORTH QUEENSLAND).—We have eight or nine different Finches here now, two or three breeding—*gouldiæ*, *cincta*, and *castanotis*. Saw a nice mob of about three dozen of *Munia pectoralis* a few days ago. First week in May I saw a nest of Moreton Bay Rosellas (*pallidiceps*) taken out of gum tree by a timber getter—three young birds well feathered and two only just hatched. Only one small spout in the limb of tree, so there was certainly only one nest. Was very much puzzled at time. This must have been a similar case to one mentioned by you in *Emu*. I think the drought must be the cause of so many birds nesting out of their usual time.—JOHN H. SMEDLEY.

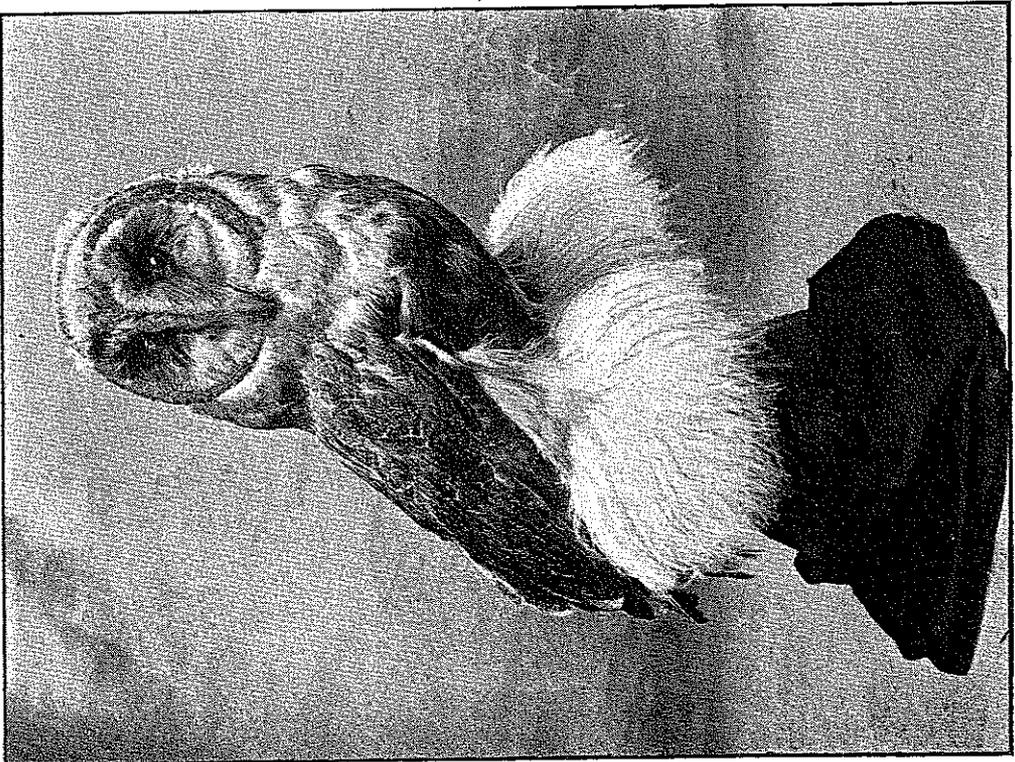
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WOOD-SWALLOWS AS HONEY-EATERS.—*Re* remarks in last issue of *The Emu* (page 68), I have kept two pairs of Wood-Swallows for the last seven months. They were turned out into an aviary in which there was honey for some *Meliphagidæ*. No sooner were the Wood-Swallows at liberty than they made their way to the pot, and seemed to recognize it as a natural diet. At present they live principally on fruit and honey, with a little lark food and occasional insects by way of a treat. They visit scented flowers, but I do not know whether in search of honey or not. The brush tongue would seem to indicate that honey was in the wild state a food sometimes used, though perhaps, as in the case of some honey-eating Parrots, not necessary always to subsistence.—(MISS) HELEN BOWIE. Clifton Hill, near Melbourne.



Feathers, with down adhering, from Chestnut-faced Owl.

FROM A PHOTO. BY D. LE SOUEF.



Chestnut-faced Owl, showing remnant of nest-down.

FROM A PHOTO. BY H. O. THOMPSON.

"LAUGHING JACKASSES."—On a farm near Bayswater these birds are so tame that they take worms from a ploughman's hand, and one recently was so keen in his pursuit of upturned "treasures" that a plough-horse stepped on him.—H. K.

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EFFECT OF DROUGHT ON BIRDS.—I think a great many of our feathered friends must have died during the drought, as there are very few to be seen here this season, so far. The clutches of eggs I have noticed were all very pale in colour, not like those of other years, excepting the eggs of Waders, which remain normal in their colouration.—SEP. ROBINSON. Condamine River (Q.), 24/8/03.

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OWL AND GREAT KINGFISHER.—A correspondent, under date 6/8/03, Toowong (Queensland), sends the following note:—"On Sunday last, while looking through a patch of scrub, I disturbed an Owl. As it flew away, the partly eaten body of the common Laughing Jackass fell to the ground. It was quite fresh, and had evidently been killed on the previous night. The Owl was too wild to allow of anything like a close observation, but appeared, although of large size and strong flight, not quite large enough for the Great Owl. I have seen the latter in possession of the body of a large flying squirrel, but that the Jackass should be a victim seemed unusual."

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OWL IN CURIOUS PLUMAGE.—The accompanying photograph is of a Chestnut-faced Owl (*Strix novæ-hollandiæ*), which was killed in a barn at Coombank, 118 miles out of Launceston, Tasmania. As will be seen, it is a young bird, but for some reason or other the nesting down does not seem to have been shed from its legs, which gives the bird a very curious and striking appearance. It would be interesting to know if anyone has noticed a similar case. The bird also has a small amount of down on its head. The photograph of the bird, and also some of the down feathers, were kindly sent over to me by Mr. H. C. Thompson, of Launceston.—D. Le SOUËF. Melbourne.

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EMU BONES ON KING ISLAND.—Of no small interest is the decision of the Melbourne Museum that two bones (a thigh and a portion of a pelvis) from King Island belong to the Emu (*Dromæus novæ-hollandiæ*). The remains, in a fair state of preservation, were found on the margin of a lagoon on the east coast. In other parts of King Island, and also on other large islands in Bass Strait, notably Kent Group, sand-drifts sometimes expose remains of the Tasmanian wombat, now extinct on all islands but Tasmania itself, but this is the only occasion on which the Emu has been associated with them in the dune sands forming the land surface of to-day. It is significant that the specimens show no difference from the corresponding bones of the mainland

Emu, from which, then, the Tasmanian variety, extinct only since the white man's advent, could not have essentially differed.

—A. G. CAMPBELL. Melbourne.

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EXTENSION OF LOCALITY.—*Sittella tenuirostris* (Gould).—I have to report the occurrence of this species in Western Australia. Mr. Fred. Lawson forwarded to the Perth Museum several skins which he procured in the Murchison district. I think it is quite distinct from *S. pileata* and entitled to rank as a species.—ALEX. WM. MILLIGAN. Perth, 17/8/03.

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STRIKING WIRES.—*Podargus strigoides* (Latham).—A friend of mine, Mr. W. J. Reardon, of Guildford, Western Australia, reported a singular occurrence to me which came under his own observation concerning a bird of the above species. Whilst crossing some fields between his country residence and the Guildford railway station, his attention was attracted to a large bird hanging on a neighbour's barb-wire fence. Being a bird-lover (and, by the way, one who gives the despised Green-backed Silver-eye (*Zosterops gouldi*) its full due as one of the most potent enemies of the dreaded fruit-fly) he approached the suspended bird, which he took to be dead, when it, to his surprise, gave the most hostile signs of vitality by opening its capacious mouth in an angry manner. Examining it carefully he found it had impaled itself firmly by its wing on a projecting barb, and in its struggles to get free had further entangled itself by throwing itself over the cable and broken its wing. He at once disengaged and released the bird. It is evident that in the darkness it had flown directly against the barb with considerable force and struck it with the shoulder of its wing.

Anas superciliosa (Gmelin).—Another singular occurrence took place at Highgate Hill (a suburb of Perth) some three months ago. A pair of Black Ducks was observed to be flying very low, and much to the surprise of a policeman and a resident, who were engaged in conversation, the birds struck the telegraph wire, with the result that one was decapitated and the other maimed and killed. The policeman ignored the law of treasure-trove and the other man was ignorant of it.—ALEX. WM. MILLIGAN. Perth, 17/8/03.

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A UNIQUE OOLOGICAL SPECIMEN.—The Emu is unfortunately extinct in Tasmania, therefore it may be interesting to give the dimensions of one of its eggs which is in the possession of the writer. This unique specimen was collected about forty years ago in the eastern district of the island, and if it is a fair type of their size, these birds must have been slightly smaller than the Australian race, and it would be interesting to know the dimensions of any other authentic eggs that may still be in existence (excepting the one in Mr. J. W. Mellor's collection,

mentioned in Mr. Campbell's "Nests and Eggs," p. 1,069). The granulations on a lighter ground appear finer than those from the mainland; and the egg is very dark green in colour; it measures 4.85 x 3.40 inches.—D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne.

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ALEXANDRA PARRAKEET IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.—Recently Mr. and Mrs. Hunter arrived in Melbourne from Western Australia, bringing with them nine Parrots. My attention was at once centred on a pair which I believed to be Alexandra Parakeets (*Polytelis alexandræ*). Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, who were living at Menzies, in the East Murchison District, said that the blacks procured the Parrots, about 25 miles from that town, last October. The blacks had never previously noticed these birds in the district.* Mr. Ed. D'Ombraïn has since seen the birds, and has confirmed my surmise as to their name.—T. HURST. Melbourne, 10/6/03.

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SOME MAY NOTES FROM CENTRAL QUEENSLAND.—On 16th May I shot a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), and when cleaning it found an egg ready for laying and several smaller ones; some had already been laid. I have since refrained from shooting Ducks. I have also found the following birds nesting:—Partridge-Pigeon (*Geophaps scripta*), 15th May; Little Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*), 23/5/03; Pale-headed Parakeet (*Platycercus pallidiceps*), 16/5/03; Red-winged Lory (*Ptilinopus erythropterus*), 20/5/03; Little Lorikeet (*Glossopsittacus pusillus*), 25/5/03; Chestnut-eared Finch (*Tæniopygia castanotis*), 26/5/03; Banded Finch (*Stictoptera bichenovii*), 14/5/03; Black-headed Pardalote (*Pardalotus melanocephalus*), 26/5/03; Red-browed Pardalote (*Pardalotus rubricatus*), 26/5/03; Blue-faced Honey-eater (*Entomyza cyanotis*), 27/5/03; Miner (*Myzantha garrula*), 20/5/03; Fuscous Honey-eater (*Ptilotis fusca*), 27/5/03; The Little Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*) is very seldom seen in this part, preferring to keep further west, but these birds are here in numbers now, as are also Cockatoo-Parrots (*Calopsittacus novæ-hollandiæ*), another visitor to these parts.—H. GREENSILL BARNARD. Binbi, viâ Rockhampton.

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DO BIRDS FIND FOOD BY INSTINCT OR SIGHT?—A flock (about 20) of Blue-bellied Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus novæ-hollandiæ*) came to a clump of sugar gums (eucalypts) I have planted for shelter last December, and stayed while the blossoms lasted. I have not seen these birds about this district for over twenty years, not even flying overhead. The latter end of December a heavy thunderstorm, about two miles wide, passed over this district, causing thistles, &c., to spring up and grow luxuriantly. In March and April numbers of the Rose-breasted Cockatoos (*Cacatua*

* The Alexandra Parakeet has been noted for North-West Australia, but not previously for W.A. proper.—EDS.

roseicapilla) came and fed on the strip. I have not previously seen them feeding here (now over thirty years). Doubtless, owing to the severe drought, they sought new feeding grounds, returning to their natural haunts when the rain came. Last, but not least, quite a number of Emus found their way down from the scrub country about 100 miles north, and would doubtless have reached the mountains, where there was abundance of water and food, but for the ruthless way they were hunted and destroyed, the *Game Act* notwithstanding.—JOSEPH A. HILL. Kewell, *viâ* Murtoa (Victoria).

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SOUTHERLY RANGE OF LONG-BILLED COCKATOO.—In a letter I have received from Mr. Geo. Graham, of Scott's Creek (Victoria), he states, under date 10/5/03, that in his locality are "a flock of White Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) which range in numbers from 50 to 150, and since the summer of 1900 a small flock of Long-billed Cockatoos (*Licmetis nasica*) have joined our White Cockatoos, have bred two seasons, and are increasing. . . . One would think that the cold and wet of our winters would drive them north again, but not so; they intend to remain." Mr. Graham asks if *L. nasica* has previously been noted as resident in a similar southern situation. Of course it seems reasonable to suppose that the prolonged drought in the normal habitat of the Corella has been an important factor in producing this exceptional migration, and it will be interesting to note whether next spring will see an exodus of these birds from the southern portion of Victoria, now that the condition of the northern districts and the interior is less severe.—W. J. STEPHEN. Hawthorn, 1/7/03.

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EMU-NESTS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND.—Have seen three clutches of Emus' eggs this winter—viz., thirteen, eleven, and nine. The first and last were considerably incubated, and therefore full clutches, while the middle set was also, I think, a full setting, but quite fresh, so it was taken and duly made into brownies, puddings, and omelettes, the shells being saved for cabinet specimens. This lot was a beautiful clutch. Three eggs picked out at random measured in inches—(1) $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3$, (2 and 3) $5\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; average weight of the three, 1 lb. $9\frac{1}{8}$ ozs. The dates of finding the nests were 22nd June, 28th June, and 1st July. I heard of two other nests being found, about 12th June (seven eggs) and about 14th June (two eggs, unfinished clutch). It seems to take some fuss to make the birds desert their nests. Two of the above nests were under constant observation, the thirteen-egg nest being looked at every other day. The boundary rider in charge of the paddocks in which they were assured me he was on most friendly terms with the sitting bird; he could almost put his hand on it before it rose from the nest. This lot was hatched during the third week in July.—FRED L. BERNEY. Wyangerie, 27/4/03.

BIRD PROTECTION IN GREAT BRITAIN.—When a journal of such standing as *The Times* devotes a leading article to this subject, and opens its columns to correspondence in aid of the good cause, one recognizes that the movement in its favour has at least influential support. Whilst advocating our case, and saying that “What is needed is that which may in some degree be brought about by a society seeking to disseminate a wholesome, unaffected love of nature, and a reverence for things now really in danger,” *The Times* writer condemns, perhaps too whole-heartedly, the bird-catcher. “With us, and indeed everywhere, he is generally a skulking loafer, whose tricks are of the meanest order. . . . He is cruel, ignorant, idle, and a pest.” The demands of “murderous millinery” and “fashion,” it is pointed out, will continue until a knowledge of nature comes—not necessarily scientific, but “taken in without effort, never forgotten, and forbidding waste and desecration of the best things around one.” The “deformed thief” of Shakespeare is certainly the bird-lovers’ greatest enemy. Can we not enlist more ladies in our cause? Bearing in mind what they have done in the United States, might it not be worth the while of the Aust. O.U. to admit them at a nominal subscription? It needs their aid.

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AMENDMENTS—W.A. COLUMN—SCHEDULE OF CLOSE SEASONS (*Emu* vol. ii., p. 190).—Finches are protected for whole year. Doves are protected for whole year. Wild Duck, 1st July to 23rd December, except Kimberley.

Mr. H. E. Hill (Guildford) has kindly furnished me with a copy of the following proclamations of Game Reserves for birds:—Portions of Swan River, as follows:—From the Midland Railway Bridge (Upper Swan) over said river, downwards to its mouth and to the extreme western end of the breakwater at Fremantle; to include Perth and Melville Waters and Freshwater Bay; proclaimed 3/8/98. Portions of the Helena River, as follows:—From the Canning Jarrah Timber Company’s Railway Bridge, over Helena River, downwards to its junction with the Swan River; proclaimed 3/8/98. The Vasse River and Estuary, within the boundaries of the municipality; proclaimed 6/2/01. The Leschenault Estuary, from its head to its entrance into the sea at Bunbury; proclaimed 31/7/95. Monger’s Lake and Herdsman’s Lake, near Leederville; proclaimed respectively 3/1/01 and 15/2/02. The Abrolhos Islands, proclaimed 26/5/98; and the Pelican Island, in Shark Bay, proclaimed 15/3/00.—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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KOLORA (VICT.) NOTES.—As late as 20th January a Swamp-Hawk’s (*Circus gouldi*) nest was found here, with three young ones just getting feathered, and on the 7th of the same month I discovered a Ground-Lark (*Anthus australis*) sitting on three eggs. The little White-eyes (*Zosterops*) and Firetails (Finches) made their appearance together this year during the first week

in March. There are a few of the former here still, though the latter have all gone. The Robins (Flame-breasted) were a month later in coming; it was the second week in April before I saw one, and I saw the first Thrush the same day. There was a speckled Ground-Thrush in the garden this winter, the only one I ever remember to have seen here. One day in the middle of March a great number of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chaetura caudacuta*) passed, flying very low and in a southerly direction. Since the heavy rains in June I have noticed more Black Swans than I have seen for years, but they are moving about a great deal. In captivity we have several pairs of Cape Barren Geese, which bred on the place. They usually begin to lay about the end of May or early in June, though one began as early as 27th April one year. If they lay early in the season they will sometimes lay a second time, but not as a rule.—G. L. DENNIS. Eeyeuk, 4/7/03.

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THE NORTH AMERICAN CHECK-LIST.—On the 20th anniversary of the appointment of "the Committee on the Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds," it was shown in a paper by Dr. J. A. Allen that the additions made since its appointment embraced 3 sub-families, 7 genera, 3 sub-genera, 54 species, and 181 sub-species, representing an increase as regards the constituents of North American avifauna of 24.7 per cent. The changes in nomenclature were 169. The list published in July, 1902, contained 1,186 forms, representing 822 species and 364 sub-species, and the opinion is expressed that "probably very few, if any, *bonâ fide* species remain to be discovered within our Check-List limits." It is urged, however, that research should not be confined within these bounds. Dr. Allen concludes his paper with a passage which may be worth the consideration of the framers of an Australian Check-List, whenever that work is undertaken:—"Plainly, not every degree of differentiation that can be recognized by the trained expert needs recognition by name, and not every slightly differentiated form that can be distinguished readily on comparison of large series of specimens should be considered as entitled to a place in a list of North American birds. The trinomial system, unfortunately, lends itself readily to abuse, and can easily be made to bring the whole system of naming sub-species into disrepute. Whether or not the differentiation is so readily distinguishable as to warrant its recognition in nomenclature is a question that may very fittingly be left to a committee of experts, whose combined opinion is more likely to be right than that of a single authority, however cautious and experienced."

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LAUNCESTON NOTES.—The winter we have just turned our back on has been on the whole fairly mild, notwithstanding that it has been the wettest experienced for some ten years. About the 20th July, while on an excursion some 12 miles down the Tamar,

I observed some male Blue Wrens (*Malurus gouldi*) in full summer plumage. On the 1st August I noticed that others of the same species about Launceston gardens were attaining full plumage. Round about St. Leonards, some five miles south of the city, this species never moulted at all, so far as could be observed. The vanguard of the Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) put in an appearance on the 26th of last month. As I mentioned in a previous note, a pair has been with us all the winter. After an absence of many months a flock of White-fronted Chats (*Ephthianura albifrons*) suddenly appeared on the outskirts of the city on 30th August. In all probability they came from the midland districts.

Of late years the Goldfinches (*Carduelis elegans*) have developed the mischievous trait of destroying the buds of peach trees as soon as they open. At first I was under the impression they were merely hunting for aphids among the blossoms, but after long and continued observation came to the conclusion the buds were wilfully destroyed, for some reason or reasons unknown. In every instance the petals of the expanding blossom would be pulled off and the tip of the tiny embryo fruit nipped through. The thought has occurred to me that perhaps the birds have cultivated a taste for prussic acid, a minute portion of which poison is contained in each fruit.—FRANK M. LITTLER. 4/9/03.

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EARLY SPRING NOTES.—I should like to place on record the fact that the Swallow (*H. neoxena*) arrives *in pairs* to take up its summer abode here. This morning, while walking on the Don Beach, I saw the first pair of the season, evidently just arrived, and winging their way up the coast. They were flying about 18 feet above the margin of the water. Later on in the morning I came across a second pair sitting on a spar which projected over a small creek running down the beach. This pair seemed somewhat exhausted, and their plumage was ruffled, the wind having been adverse as they crossed the Straits. To-day I heard also the first Cuckoo of the season, the Fan-tailed (*C. flabelliformis*), trilling among the scrub near the Don River, and yesterday noted the sweet, protracted call of the Grey-tailed Thickhead, sounding like "Weet-weet-weet-tuee!" in the heads of some tall stringybarks which border a bush road. Some time ago Mr. Hall, when writing me, expressed his opinion that the females of the two Robins, the Scarlet and Flame-breasted, *both* had coloured breasts. This was contrary to my own field observations, and yesterday I had an opportunity of confirming these. On the banks of the Mersey River I saw a male Flame-breasted (*Petræca phænicea*) in fine plumage, consorting with a hen whose breast was just light grey, as was the abdomen, without a trace of bright colour. The two were evidently mated. The female of the Scarlet-breasted (*P. leggit*) has a patch of colour on the breast, and is, to my mind, of a more robust figure than the hen of *P. phænicea*. These observations seem to point to a difference,

as far as plumage is concerned, in the female of *P. phoenicea* here and on the mainland.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport (T.), 26/8/03.

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NESTS AND EGGS OF *XEROPHILA CASTANEIVENTRIS* (MILLIGAN).—In the last issue of *The Emu* (p. 70) Mr. A. W. Milligan described a Chestnut-bellied Whiteface—a new and very distinct species of *Xerophila*. Knowing that I possessed eggs of a *Xerophila* from the same region (Murchison, W.A.), he thoughtfully sent me (per favour of Mr. B. Woodward, F.G.S., Curator of the Perth Museum) a set of eggs for comparison and description, collected by Mr. Fred. Lawson.

The following is Mr. Milligan's description of the nest :—

"Resembles in a general way those of the other members of the genus, being somewhat bulky in size, loose in construction, and irregular in form. It has a covered top and a side entrance, the latter being large and lacking neatness in construction. The materials composing it are a heterogeneous collection, comprising principally the slender and perished stems of soft-wooded plants and bleached stems of grasses, with which are intermixed cow-hair, small strips of rags, string, wool, and Emu feathers. The inside of the nest is abundantly lined with poultry feathers. The front aspect of the nest has a deep rusty-coloured appearance, owing to some of the materials being dirt-stained with the red soil of the locality. The nest was discovered in an old stump. The over-all measurements are—length, $14\frac{3}{4}$; girth, $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches."

Eggs.—Clutch 4 or 5; oval to roundish-oval in shape; texture of shell fine; surface glossy; colour, white or pinkish-white, more or less spotted and blotched with chestnut and dull purple, thickest around the apex, where these colours appear in a confluent band of purplish-brown. Dimensions in inches of a set :—(1) .74 x .52; (2) .7 x .53; (3) .7 x .53; (4) .7 x .52; (5) .69 x .52. Two sets were taken by Mr. Lawson, 14th and 25th July, 1903, respectively.—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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CAMP DATA, 1903.—*Swifts*.—13th January.—Tremendous flight of Swifts over Langton; air alive (6.45 p.m.) with them, high and low, uttering shrill cries and travelling westward; followed by thunderstorm. 17th February, 10.45 a.m.—Fair flight over Clermont, high, going east. 2nd April, 6.30 p.m.—Small flight over Logan Downs, fairly high, eastwards. 6th April, 8, 9.15 a.m.—Large flight over Logan Downs, low, going N.W. by W. 6th April, 11.30 a.m.—Large flight over Logan Downs, low, going S.W. by W. 6th April, 1.30, 4.45 p.m.—Hawking over house. 7th April.—Nice showers of rain.

24th April, Logan Downs.—Flushed sitting Bronzewing Pigeon; 2 eggs.

29th April, Logan Downs.—Flushed sitting Peaceful Dove; 2 eggs.

25th May, Wolfgang.—First frost. Red-capped Robin and mate at camp.

26th, 27th May, Wolfgang.—Wood-Swallows holding "referendum," flying high and very excited.

24th June, Malvern.—About 500 Wood-Swallows passed overhead just at sunrise, flying high and due north, keeping a straight course until out of sight.

14th July, Clermont.—Plenty of Masked Wood-Swallows. Betcherrygahs feeding young. Fairy Martins and Magpie-Larks building near lagoon.

24th to 31st July.—Plenty common Wood-Swallows building; got nest with eggs, also eggs or young of Magpies, White-winged Chough, Finches, Tree-runners, Tits, Pardalotes, and Flycatchers. Got Pale-headed Parrakeets fully fledged. Cockatoo-Parrots very plentiful; no nests found. Honey-eaters' nests noticed, but not visited.—F. B. C. FORD. Clermont (Q.), 18th August, 1903.

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QUAILS.—I noticed some time ago in one of the daily papers a reference to Quail having been washed ashore in numbers on the south-east coast and in Western Port. I have made the most searching inquiry, and fail to find anyone who can throw any light on the subject locally. Very seldom a week passes without my travelling the coast line between the Eastern Passage of Western Port and Cape Patterson, and I have not seen any traces of Quail washed up. Had such been the case I would have certainly noticed it.

Sportsmen visiting this district appear to be astounded at the scarcity of Stubble Quail this season, and all put it down to the extension of the close season, apparently forgetting the fact that last year excellent shooting was to be had up to June and July. They one and all say the birds have been here and gone before the season opened. I have always been a close observer of Quail, and have noted that if a good Quail season is followed by an early and wet winter, the birds stay with us right on, and a wet season is always followed by a number of birds. 1892 was one of the best seasons we have had in this district; the birds were plentiful on the highlands round San Remo in silver tussock grass cover, and I noted that in the early part of the season they frequented the tops and northern slopes of the hills, whilst not a bird would be found on the southern slopes, although the whole country is apparently of the same nature. After the first April rains the birds left the high lands and packed on the neighbouring flats. I think they leave the hills when the rain causes the grass seed to germinate, and seek insect food on the lower country. After June I saw very few. Observers will note that Quail are not the only birds that are scarce this year. In our part the Cuckoo family were conspicuous by their absence; only a few of the Pallid species put in an appearance. Wattle-Birds are scarce compared with other years, and Ducks have not been seen at all.—P. L. C. O'SHANNASSY. San Remo, 20/5/03.

NOTES ON SOME NEW ZEALAND BIRDS.—During the winters of 1881 and 1882 I had opportunities of observing a few New Zealand birds, and of obtaining some skins. Some of these birds are becoming rare; it may therefore be advisable to record even the little that I learned about them. One day I entered a wood on the outskirts of Invercargill, and, after waiting for a long time, descried two large, silent birds in the tree-tops, which from their movements I knew to be Parrots. They were Kakas (*Nestor meridionalis*), and as I saw no more of the Kaka I concluded that it rarely showed itself in the daytime in the neighbourhood of dwellings. At Queenstown I obtained the skin of a Kakapo (*Stringops habroptilus*), and heard that it still haunted the regions around Earnslaw (9,165 feet). A thick under-covering of down feathers protects it from their Alpine cold. The face of the Kakapo has been compared to that of an Owl. But the head is cuneate, not discoid. The Kakapo, with a wing $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, is believed to have lost the power of flight in comparatively recent times, and to have formerly been arboreal in its habits. The upper mandible is festooned, and the culmen channelled laterally for about the half of its length. The under surface of the lower mandible is deeply channelled lengthwise. The festoons may have enabled the Kakapo to retain a firmer hold of fruits or their stones than it could otherwise have done. The channels, by virtue of a law of physics, strengthen the mandibles, and thus lessen the risk of fracture. The distal portions of the rachises of the projecting feathers near the gape and the nostrils are devoid of webs and hair-like. The Lesser Grey Kiwi (*Apteryx oweni*) is furnished with long hairs* near the gape and on the forehead. One of the hairs on a stuffed skin is $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches in length. May not these hairs serve the Kiwi as feelers in the dark?

At Akaroa in July I found the Korimakos (*Anthornis melanura*) feasting on the honey in the blossoms of the loquats, whilst Kingfishers (*Halcyon vagans*), in bright attire of blue and green and fawn, darted into and out of the gardens, but whereas it was a difficult matter to drive the Korimakos away from the tree, the Kingfishers would not allow one even to approach them. There are no *Maluri* or *Acanthizæ* in New Zealand, and I saw no birds which resembled them in point of domesticity, nor any which reminded me of the Scarlet-breasted and Flame-breasted Robins of Australia and Tasmania. I have known a male of the latter species to perch on a stick held in the hand, and, on another occasion, one of these birds snatched a grub from my outstretched hand.—J. R. M'CLYMONT, M.A. Sandy Bay, Tasmania.

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PERFORMING PARROTS.—It is exceedingly interesting to know that our Australian birds exhibit undoubted reasoning powers,

* Used provisionally of a non-mammalian product.

more particularly the *Cacatuidæ* (Cockatoos). It has fallen to the lot of a lady (Madame Marzella) to bring under the notice of the public of the Commonwealth the capabilities and intelligence of some of the species by an interesting entertainment exhibiting a variety of acrobatic, amusing, and thinking "turns," the White Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) being the favourites. The other Australian kinds exhibited were the Pink (*C. leadbeateri*), Rose-breasted (*C. roseicapilla*), and the Corella or Long-billed Cockatoos (*Licmetis nasica*). The following are some of the acts performed:—Somersaulting, waltzing, spelling names by picking out letters composing a name, rolling body round and round, bicycling, and when a cannon is fired a bird "falls dead," whilst two others put him in a hearse, where he lies "stiff." Two others then act as horses, another as coachman, whilst another acts as footman. All the birds seemed to be only too ready to perform their allotted tasks. The White Cockatoo, however, shows the most intelligence, and is stated to be less stubborn when being "broken in." The Corella comes next, then the Java Cockatoo, followed by the Macaws, which are credited with great stubbornness. In first selecting the most intelligent birds, those that are small and have the feathers closely fitted to their body are chosen, large Cockatoos with loose feathers being rejected. Birds of a nervous temperament make the best performers. The White or Sulphur-crested Cockatoo is a nervous bird. Performing birds are very subject to disease, especially diphtheria and eye affections. Some of the smaller Parrots perform well, but, being small, they are not readily seen by audiences, consequently only large birds are used. The length of time taken to get a bird to perform efficiently before an audience is from 6 months to 15 months for one trick. Undoubtedly it is reason which is the factor that operates whilst the birds perform, for the simple reason that they perform what they have been taught.—A. MATTINGLEY.

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THE WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE IN NORTH QUEENSLAND.—On the 5th June I found an Eagle's (*Uroæetus audax*) nest containing two eggs, which the old bird was loath to leave. By the platform of the nest was the freshly killed, headless body of a White-fronted Heron (*Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ*) from which the legs and wings had also been removed. It is probable that the male bird feeds its sitting mate during incubation. This is more likely, as, being winter time, the eggs would not bear exposure for any lengthened time. This nest, I may state, is five days earlier than the earliest record in "Nests and Eggs" (Campbell). The stomach of the Heron was crammed with grasshoppers. In the side of the Eagle's nest two Chestnut-eared Finches (*Tæniopygia castanotis*) had built their own (a favourite resort of these Finches), and were busy feeding their family of four or five naked squabs. Doubtless the little birds felt secure beneath the notice of the "kingly bird," whose proximity at the same time kept off prowling Butcher-Birds and Crows.

In the country of open downs the Wedge-tailed Eagles are forced at times to choose strange sites for their nests ; frequently these are placed in such low bushes that I can ride up alongside and see if the nest contains eggs or young, and I hear of one containing young where the top of the nest was little higher than a table. By-the-by, I am sceptical about the Eagle's building "dining-tables" (*vide* "Nests and Eggs," p. 14). The "menu" of *U. audax* is varied, and includes lambs (a standing dish), iguanas, kangaroo-rat (an unfailing bait for poisoning purposes), Bustards or Wild Turkeys, sucking pig (plenty of wild pigs on the river), domestic fowls, and recently they took from quite close to the homestead two goat kids that were a few days old. As regards length of wing of these birds, I measured five last week—two 6 feet, two 6 feet 6 inches, and one 7 feet from tip to tip. The two smallest looked very small, and the seven-foot bird looked nothing more than a fairly big one to me. A neighbour of mine who takes a passing interest in ornithology tells me that one he poisoned looked so unusually large that he measured it and found the expanse of wings to be 9 feet. This, though exceptionally large, is, I think, quite possible. It does seem a pity to poison such noble birds, but I fear on this open country you cannot rear lambs and Eagles together.—FRED. L. BERNEY, Richmond, N.Q.

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BIRD PROTECTION IN OTHER LANDS.—The Government of India has followed in the steps of United States and other authorities in endeavouring to prevent wanton destruction of bird life for millinery purposes. Lord Curzon issued on 20th Sept., 1902, an Order in Council prohibiting "the taking by sea or by land out of British India of skins and feathers of all birds other than domestic birds, except (a) feathers of ostriches and (b) skins and feathers exported *bonâ fide* as specimens illustrative of natural history." In Great Britain and on the Continent much work is being done, and in America the good work of the Audubon Societies goes steadily on. Oklahoma and Nebraska are the latest States to fall into line ; and how widespread the movement is may be gathered from a glance at the Supplement to *The Auk* (vol. xx., new series, No. 1, January, 1903), where maps, &c., are given, showing—(1) the States where Audubon Societies exist, and (2) those which have adopted the American O.U. model law for the protection of birds. A full account of what has been done by the various legislatures up to the beginning of last year is also given in a handbook issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, wherein, by means of letter-press, engravings, and maps the amount of protection accorded in the various States and in Canada is shown ("Legislation for the Protection of Other than Game Birds," by T. S. Palmer, Assistant Chief Biological Survey, Washington: Government Printing Office. 1902). This small book should afford many valuable hints to workers in the cause here, and might with

great advantage be in the hands of Australian legislators. Illustrations of six birds are given, as well as a most interesting chapter on bird study in schools, and Mr. Palmer's summary is an admirable one. Under the title "Game Laws for 1902" (Farmers' Bulletin No. 160), and likewise issued by the same Department, a concise statement of the legislation for the protection of game is published. This is by Mr. Palmer and Mr. H. W. Olds (an assistant in the Biological Survey), and is accompanied by illustrative maps. It is equally worth perusal with the volume previously alluded to. The authors state that the game legislation of 1902 has been remarkably conservative, and that only three States remain in which unlimited shipment of game is permitted, that practically all but three protect Quail at all seasons, and that every State in which Prairie Chickens still exist prohibits their export. These publications were followed by a circular (from the same Department) which deals with "Inter-State Commerce in Birds and Game" and explains the law in this connection up to 23rd August, 1902. The Federal law enabling the Department to act in this matter must greatly help to prevent breaches of local laws. It is apparently administered more stringently than Australian game laws, and is so wide-reaching in its provisions that not only the possessor of prohibited game, but even the carrier or railway company who may transmit it, is liable to heavy penalties.

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CLERMONT (Q.) NOTES.—We have had some temporary relief from the drought, and I have resumed field work again. The birds have nested about two months earlier than usual. We had a very mild winter, and some of the deciduous trees, like the white cedar and erythrina, have not lost their leaves yet. I noticed a few flights of Wood-Swallows, apparently migrating, but the majority, especially the common sort (*sordidus*) stopped here, and have already built nests and laid. After some years' trying I obtained the nests and eggs of a small White-headed Tree-runner (*Sittella leucocephala*). The nest, resembling that of *S. chrysoptera*, was beautifully disguised and patched with small bits of bark exactly resembling the limbs, and arranged longitudinally. The eggs (3), dumpy and well spotted with black, were near incubation. My theodolite happened to be set up almost underneath the nest, which was only 10 feet from the ground, but I could not detect the nest until I sat down and waited for the bird to show it to me. I afterwards found two more of these nests; both contained young birds. The birds fly in flocks sometimes, and I have noticed amongst them some without the white head, but the bird sitting on the nest was white-headed, and almost let me put my hand on it before flying. Cockatoo-Parrots have been very numerous over this and the Springsure district, in flocks of 8 to 12. As a rule they do not frequent this part, and I have hitherto only noticed odd specimens. Eagle-Hawks are numerous, and Crows (or Ravens) and Cockatoos as

thick as they were before the drought. On the other hand, Butcher-Birds are scarce and Jackasses (*Dacelo*) extremely rare. Magpies appear to have got through fairly well. Little Quail (or Turnix) are very numerous on the forest country where the grass is rank, owing to the want of stock or marsupials to eat it. Betcherrygahs are, I think, more numerous than in normal years.

I notice two of your correspondents quote instances of Fly-catchers fighting their reflections in a window. With us the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina*) does the same. At my cottage in Clermont, one bird woke me every morning by tapping at my bedroom window, and eventually knocked out the pane of glass—the putty in this climate getting very brittle and easily detached from wood, which shrinks. I cut away the branch of vine the bird used to stand on, so now he visits another window where a tank gives him a coign of vantage. The Wild Turkeys (Bustards) have not come back, and there are very few Scrub Turkeys (*Talegallus*). Pigeons and Doves are fairly numerous, but the various Ducks very scarce. Where I am at present camped Finches are very numerous. The whirr of their wings when disturbed at the drinking-trough gives one quite a start. Bower-Birds (Spotted) are fairly plentiful, and there was a very fair “play-house” quite close to my tent at my last camp, and their antics were very amusing to watch.—
F. B. C. FORD. Survey Camp, Clermont (Q.), 18/8/03.

From Magazines, &c.

AMONGST publications received is one (forwarded by the courtesy of Dr. O. Finsch from the Leyden Museum) dealing with a species of African Pitta. The author prefers the name *P. argolensis* to some others which have been used for this bird.

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A NATURAL HISTORY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.—The Government of Western Australia has issued, in a compact and profusely illustrated form, some extracts from the Year-Books of that State. This is virtually not only a natural history of the State, but a guide to its geology and many other scientific matters. The able article on birds is contributed by Mr. A. W. Milligan, and hence there is no need to give it further praise. When the new species recorded since have been added, it will prove most valuable as a work of reference to Australian ornithologists, as well as to those whose interest is confined to other branches of natural history.

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LAND BIRDS AT SEA.—Mr. David G. Stead (Sydney) writing to *The Zoologist* (June, 1903), states that Mr. George Hutton, of the Orient liner *Omrah*, informed him that while this steamer was on a recent trip from Ceylon to Australia a Crow accompanied