

Stray Feathers.

HONEY-EATER NEW FOR QUEENSLAND.—I send a skin which answers well to Gould's description of the White-fronted Honey-eater (*Glycyphila albifrons*), but the total length measurements do not quite agree, my bird being so much bigger.—FRED. L. BERNEY. Richmond (N.Q.), 3/8/04.

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KOLORA (*viâ* TERANG) NOTES.—About the beginning of the year I saw a small flock of Cockatoo-Parrots (*Calopsittacus novæ-hollandiæ*) here, which is very unusual. I have never seen them so far south before, though once or twice I have heard of them being in the district.

Large flocks of Crows (or Ravens) have been hard at work lately turning up the ground in search of grubs. I noticed that the White-eyed and the Hazel-eyed were in about equal numbers. Last spring one of our *employés* discovered a young albino Crow. It was being fed by its black parents when first seen. He tried to capture it alive, but, as it could fly well, he inadvertently killed it in the attempt. It is now stuffed and in a glass case. The colour of the feathers is a rather creamy white; the beak and legs are also white.—G. L. DENNIS. Eeyeuk, 6/7/04.

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CROSSBRED PARRAKEETS.—The following is a description of cross between Pale-headed Parrakeet (*Platycercus pallidiceps*) and Yellow-vented Parrakeet (*Psephotus xanthorrhous*) in the possession of Mr. V. Heinrichs, Murtoa:—Bill light pink; head yellow; cheeks blue, with a beautiful pinkish tinge; back and upper tail coverts dark green, four centre tail feathers being dark green, other tail feathers being dark blue with light tips; breast and under tail coverts red; humeral feathers dark red; primaries and secondaries blue; wing coverts brownish-olive. The feathers have a scaly appearance, particularly about the head and neck. There is also a beautiful pinkish tinge on the extreme edge of the back and neck feathers. The length of the birds is about 14 inches, and they are very plump, and very strong on the wing. They are very wild, and show no inclination to talk, although Mr. Heinrichs (who is a bird-fancier) has used different methods to induce them to do so. He reared three of them in 1898, two of which are still alive.—J. A. HILL. Kewell, 16/8/04.

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COOMOBOOLAROO (Q.) NOTES.—The great numbers of Cockatoo-Parrots which the drought drove here from the west, and which were breeding about here last winter, have quite disappeared. The pink-eyed Little Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*), which is a very rare visitor, was here in great numbers all last winter,

and nests and young birds were plentiful, but I have neither seen nor heard them for months, so conclude they have also gone west again. Another little bird that has been conspicuous by its absence since the return to good seasons is the Orange-backed Wren (*Malurus melanocephalus*). They were always fairly plentiful in the long grass, and we were seldom without a little flock of them in our garden. For some months past I have noticed that we never see them now, and I cannot recall having once seen any since the drought broke up. My brother has noticed the same thing, and has not seen any during the past two years. I have noticed the other kind, which we find in our scrub—*M. lamberti*, I think.

The Pallid Cuckoo, which either leaves us altogether in the winter, or else is so quiet that it is unnoticed, has been much in evidence all this winter, though I find in my notes for last winter that the first one was heard on 18th July. Fairy Martins (*L. ariel*) seem to have been with us all the winter, and have been interesting themselves in some old nests under one of the verandahs, putting on spouts, &c., but so far, I believe, have not laid. We always have one or two pairs of the Barred-shouldered Dove (*G. humeralis*) in the garden, and one pair has brought out two clutches of young since the beginning of April last, and is now repairing the nest for a third attempt. Good luck to them! Last year the first Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops*) was heard on 6th September, and Dollar-Birds (*Eury-stomus*) on 10th October.—CHAS. A. BARNARD. 10/8/04.

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FINCHES IN NORTHERN QUEENSLAND.—A short note on the Finches of this district I think will reply to your query *re* *Munia pectoralis* in July's (1904) *Emu*, on page 24. All the species given below I have shot or taken alive within 25 miles either side of Northern railway line from the Lower Burdekin River to Warrigul Creek, a distance of about 80 miles, and from 700 to 1,500 feet above sea-level, mostly ironbark and box country, with plenty of wattle (*acacia*).

Spotted-sided Finch (*Staganopleura guttata*).—A few always to be found on the Cape River.

Chestnut-eared Finch (*Tæniopygia castanotis*).—Very common all over district.

Banded Finch (*Stictoptera bichenovii*).—In the gullies under the ranges; fairly common.

Chestnut-breasted Finch (*Munia castaneithorax*).—Common in wet seasons.

White-breasted Finch (*M. pectoralis*).—Saw first specimen in 1899, taken on Campaspe River; got a nest 26th April, 1895, inside railway fence (homestead). Few to be seen here now. I have some alive in cage.

Plumhead Finch (*Aidemosyne modesta*).—Very common.

Red-browed Finch (*Ægintha temporalis*).—I have brought this

handsome little bird from Cromarty, on the coast, and Sellheim on the Burdekin, but cannot get them to live long.

Black-throated Finch (*Poephila cincta*).—Common all over district. Have seen them catching and eating white ants (*termites*), the winged ones, any time after heavy rain. They seem to enjoy a feed of ants.

Gouldian Finch (*P. gouldiæ*).—Common in the season, December to May. They breed here in holes in the various trees. They leave after the young ones are able to feed themselves. They seem to go northward.

Crimson Finch (*Neochmia phaeton*).—Not common, though often to be seen in pandanus flats.—JOHN H. SMEDLEY.

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THE BIRDS OF WONGAN HILLS, W.A.—Referring to Mr. A. W. Milligan's "Trip to the Wongan Hills" (*Emu*, Part I., vol. iv.), the White-tailed Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudini*) occurs plentifully on the lower Murchison River, as mentioned in the opening remarks of "Birds Occurring in the Region of the North-West Cape" (*Emu*, part 1, vol. iii.), that is, 200 miles further north than the Wongan Hills, which locality Mr. Milligan gives as the northern limit of this species. I can confirm his remarks that further north of the Wongan Hills his east and west limits of many species will not apply, as *Glycyphila albifrons* and *Acanthiza uropygialis* occurred right down to the coast line at Point Cloates, which is nearly 200 miles further west than these hills. Mr. Milligan has apparently used the word "eastward" in mistake for "westward" where he remarks that the Darling Ranges form "an insuperable barrier to their *eastward* movements" (*i.e.*, his ultramontane species). A more probable theory is that the great difference in vegetation (affecting the food supply) between the east and west sides of the Darling Ranges makes these hills a natural boundary for many species, as there is nothing whatever in their formation to prevent birds of feeble wing power crossing them. Were the vegetation the same on both sides of these hills there would probably be no difference in the species of birds occurring east and west of them. In conclusion, referring to Mr. Milligan's description of the supposed new Kestrel (*Cerchneis unicolor*), a glance at a map of this State will show that it is misleading to speak of Yalgoo as being in the north-west, as it is only 300 miles north (by east) of Perth and is hardly even a central district, but naturally belongs more to the south-west. Kestrels were numerous from the Gascoyne River to the Ashburton River in the north-west, but although I am now unable to refer to the collection of skins made by me in that district, I am very positive that they were all referable to the common form (*C. cenchroides*), and in my long residence there no Kestrel was ever observed to attack poultry. Any information extending the range of the new species will be extremely interesting.—THOMAS CARTER. Perth, W.A., 30/7/04.

CLARKE ISLAND (BASS STRAIT) NOTES.—It is a serious fact, at least as far as those who make a living by them are concerned, that the Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) is getting visibly scarcer. Last season the catch was far less than usual, and this year only about half the number have been taken, and these much under the regular size and weight. The scarcity may possibly be accounted for by this—namely, in November and December, when the eggs were hatching, terrific downfalls of rain occurred, which filled up a great many of the holes with sand and water. As far as being thin and small, one can only conjecture that the food supply was not so plentiful as usual. The principal island (Chappell) has again been leased for grazing sheep, as it is contended that no damage is done if they are taken off shortly before the laying season. Granted that they are not so harmful as cattle, still they do not certainly improve matters, especially as the stock is never off to time.

The Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis*) has laid very early this year, as some eggs were taken in June, and were then found to be hard set. Their breeding season is somewhat hard to define, as one will also get fresh eggs in September. This is in itself somewhat of a protection to the bird.

The Wild Duck of any species is a *rara avis* this year, and one could spend a day amongst the numerous little lakes here and would then perhaps see only half a dozen.

The Brush Bronze-wing Pigeon (*Phaps elegans*), on the contrary, is very numerous, it being quite a common sight to see seven or eight together. Their invariable haunts are under the wild cherry (*Exocarpus*) bushes, where they feed largely on the old cherry-stones amongst the dead leaves at the foot of the tree.

Brown Quails (*Synæcus australis*) are also in force. It is curious to notice the difference between the birds that frequent the uplands and those that prefer the plains. The former will be large and strong on the wing, while the latter are often so feeble that they will only fly a few yards, and one can then often catch them. They are mostly very thin.

The Olive Thickhead (*Pachycephala olivacea*), which breeds largely here, is noticeably numerous, but the different species of Honey-eaters are scarce as yet. These, however, do not make themselves conspicuous until August and September, lying close during the winter months.

I have not seen a Black Crow-Shrike (*Strepera fuliginosa*) for months; generally these birds are a most constant companion, frequenting the sea-beach and feeding on the numberless sand-hoppers that exist in the cast-up sea-weed.—J. D. MACLAINE.
21/7/04.

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REMARKS ON CERTAIN MELITHREPTI.—About three years ago Mr. Fred. L. Berney forwarded from Homestead (North Queensland) a Honey-eater which I could not altogether recognize. He

kindly caused other specimens, taken by Mr. J. H. Smedley, to be forwarded later. Judging by this material (four skins) there appear grounds for making a new variety, if not sub-species.

The new bird most resembles *Melithreptus lætior*, from which it differs in its general darker tone of colouring and in the bare space round the eye being *greenish-blue* instead of *bright yellow* (Gould) or *greenish-yellow* (Hall-Rogers).* It has been stated that *M. lætior* may be only a very fine example of *M. gularis*. *M. gularis* is a much heavier species, and otherwise quite distinct. It has been taken in Victoria, where *M. lætior* is never seen, and appears to be the mainland form of the still larger *M. validirostris* of Tasmania. Mr. A. J. North mentions that *M. lætior* is found in the Gulf district of Northern Queensland† and in the event of the "Check-List" Committee separating the Eastern from the Western and interior form I would suggest the name *Melithreptus carpentariana* for the North Queensland bird. Subjoined is its description:—

Male.—Head, nape, and ear coverts jet black; band round the nape of the neck pure white; upper surface from hind-neck to upper tail coverts greenish-yellow; wings dark brown or fuscous, the feathers narrowly margined with grey or light brown; tail dark brown, the feathers more or less margined with greenish-yellow; cheeks white; rest of under surface (including under wing coverts) buffy or ashy white, darkest on throat, and blending into a distinct blackish chin. Bill black; tarsi light-coloured or yellowish; bare space round the eye pale greenish-blue.

Female.—A little less inferior in colouring and size.

Young.—Upper surface, including the head (excepting the nape stripe, whitish), has a greyish-brown tinge, with the rump and upper tail coverts only yellowish; under surface darker, also greenish skin round the eye darker than in adults. Bill yellowish (like the feet) except the point of the upper mandible, which is blackish.

Dimensions in inches.—Male.—Total length, 5.75; culmen, .5; wing, 3.24; tail, 2.5; tarsus, .75. Female.—Total length, 5.5; culmen, .5; wing, 3.14; tail, 2.4; tarsus, .75. Young.—Total length, 5.0; culmen, .5; wing, 3.05; tail, 2.3; tarsus, .7.—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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SURVEY CAMP NOTES, 1903. — 14th July. — Betcherrygahs (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Martins (*Artamus leucogaster*), and Peewees (*Grallina picata*) breeding on Clermont lagoon.

24th July.—Grey Flycatchers (*Myiagra albiscapa*) with young; Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), with nest, chasing all and sundry (Peak Downs).

18th August.—Cotherstone.—Channelbill (*Scythrops novæ-*

* *Emu*, vol. i., p. 101 (1902).

† Proc. Roy. Soc. S.A., vol. xxii., p. 151 (1898).

hollandiæ) calling at night. Fire-tail Finches very numerous; also Quail, especially small Chestnut-throated ones (*Turnix pyrrhothorax*); large grey Stubble (*Coturnix pectoralis*), and Brown (*Synæcus australis*) scarcer. Eggs and young of small sort frequently seen.

25th August.—Blue Mountain Parrot (*Trichoglossus novæ-hollandiæ*) is nesting.

26th August.—Young Yellow Robins (*Eopsaltria magnirostris*) fully fledged; Fork-tail Jays (Drongo-Shrike) just hatched; Sulphur-crested Cockatoos nesting.

28th August.—Caught young Squatter-Pigeon (*Geophaps scripta*). Saw Sparrow (*Accipiter cirrhocephalus*) and Brown Hawks (*Hieracidea orientalis*) nesting.

29th August.—Caught young Pale-headed Parrakeet (*Platycercus pallidiceps*). Saw young Betcherrygahs.

30th August.—Tits (Yellow-rumped) (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) left nest at camp.

1st September.—Black-faced Graucalus (*G. melanops*) with young in nest.

4th to 20th September.—Shepherd's Companion (*Rhipidura tricolor*) with nest about 6 feet from cook's fire, not a bit afraid and not minding smoke. Male and female relieved one another on nest at intervals. Cook reported that about 11 o'clock on 12th they made a great commotion, and, surmising that an egg had hatched, he looked and found it was so. Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) with nest chased us morning and evening for about a quarter mile, snapping its bill within a few feet of our heads.

Clermont.—16th October.—Wood-Swallows (*Artamus leucogaster*) with nest in back yard in Clermont.

18th October.—Channelbill (*Scythrops novæ-hollandiæ*) heard at night.

14th October.—Numbers of Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) (about 50) roosting in young Moreton Bay ash, disturbed by storm at sunset, flew to more rigid perch in a fig-tree.

Retro.—1st November.—Solitary Spine-tailed Swift over Retro, 2 p.m., flying south-east. No others seen.

4th November.—Four red-spotted eggs of small yellow-breasted, white-throated bird found in beautiful hanging nest.*

6th November.—Four eggs of Black-faced Graucalus (*Graucalus melanops*)—three fresh, one partially incubated.

9th November.—Red-capped Robin (*Petræca goodenovi*) in garden. Bower-Birds (Spotted) (*Chlamydera maculata*) taking young mandarin oranges to bower; boundary rider reported finding bower strewn with these and the usual snail shells.

20th December.—Shot two Spotted Bower-Birds devouring the grapes.

27th December.—Peewees (*Grallina*) with young in the nest referred to in July.

* ? White-throated Fly-eater (*Gerygone albigularis*).—EDS.

Clermont.—3rd January, 1904.—Bee-eaters feeding four young ones on my garden fence, Clermont.

Langton.—8th January.—Quail very numerous on volcanic downs, especially small chestnut-throated variety. Caught young ones.—J. B. C. FORD. Clermont (Q.), 15/1/04.

From Magazines, &c.

AT a meeting of the Linnean Society of N.S. Wales, held 27th April, 1904 (see Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W., vol. xxix., part 1, p. 130) Mr. A. J. North exhibited, amongst other interesting northern Finches, the rare *Munia flaviprymna* (Gould) and *Poephila atropygialis* (Diggles), recording that he considered *P. nigrotecta* (Hartert) is a synonym of the latter species—a conclusion previously pointed out in another work.*

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MR. G. A. KEARTLAND is the proud possessor of the only known clutch (two eggs) of the scarce Guttated Bower-Bird (*Chlamydera guttata*). One egg was previously described by Mr. A. J. North. The description of the second, by the same author, has appeared in the "Records of the Australian Museum," vol. v., p. 131 (1904), together with an illustration (plate xvi.) of a nest, the usual flattish, twig-built structure characteristic of the genera. The nest was found during January, 1903, in a native orange tree (*Capparis*), and contained three young.

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MR. J. C. GOUDIE contributes an agreeable article—"A Summer in South Gippsland"—to the *Victorian Naturalist* (August, 1904), wherein he records some of his pleasant reminiscences of forest-loving birds. On climbing a few feet to look into a Lyre-Bird's nest he was anticipated by meeting "eye to eye" a tiger snake gliding out instead of seeing the wonderful *Menura*. Mr. Goudie mentions having seen a small company of Ground-Wrens (*Hylacola cauta*). This bird has never been previously recorded so far east, it being a dweller of the Mallee and more western parts. However, Mr. Goudie hails from the Mallee himself, and with his good field experience he should be familiar with both the species named and its congener, *H. pyrrhopygia*.

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THE rediscovery of the Ewing Tit (*Acanthiza ewingi*), as recorded at the Hobart Session of the Aust. O.U.,† has raised considerable interest. According to the Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales, vol. xxix., part 1 (issued 10th August, 1904), p. 58, Mr. A. J. North exhibited at a meeting of the Society held 30th March, 1904, skins, nest, and eggs of *A. ewingi*, together with those of *Acanthornis magna*. The birds, it was stated, were received in the

* Campbell, "Nests and Eggs," p. 496 (1900).

† *Emu*, vol. iii., pp. 159 and 162.