

entirely on insects. It is fairly plentiful all over Australia, being usually found in the neighbourhood of water; but the class of insects it preys on is not so destructive to human interests as those the Ibis feeds on. For all that, it is a bird that should be rigorously protected. There is a large class of smaller birds, such as Flycatchers and others, that are good insect-destroyers and very helpful to farmers and fruit-growers, but they are too numerous to go through in detail now. Our friend the Laughing Jackass or Giant Kingfisher is held in high esteem by many, mostly because he kills a few snakes, but he is much addicted to eating eggs and young of far better insectivorous birds than himself, and also devours many lizards, which reptiles are splendid insect-destroyers, especially useful in catching moths, consequently this bird does not hold a high place in the list of those that are useful to mankind. Magpies, Butcher-Birds, Crows, and similar birds all have their good points, but they also have their bad ones. The Ibis has none, and I think easily holds the premier place as being the most useful bird, not only in Australia but also in the other countries where it is found. These birds should be rigorously protected, especially in preventing their nesting rookeries, where thousands of birds often congregate together, from being raided for the sake of their eggs, and a heavy penalty should be enacted for taking either the birds, their eggs, or young.

### Notes and Notices.

A HIGH AIM.—Before his cousin, Mr. Gregory M. Mathews, F.L.S., &c., completes his great work "The Coloured Figures of the Birds of Australia," Mr. H. L. White, Scone, New South Wales, hopes to possess for reference the eggs of every known Australian bird. Mr. White's oological collection now exceeds 700 species, chiefly through his enterprise in sending out competent collectors last season both to North-East and North-West Australia.

COLOURED FIGURE FUND.—The hon. treasurer A.O.U. reports that the donations to the Coloured Figure Fund for the year ending 30th June last were as follow:—W. J. T. Armstrong, 3s.; F. L. Berney, 10s.; Miss Brumby, 10s.; H. Burrell, 8s.; A. L. Butler, 2s. 6d.; G. Graham, 5s.; J. Greenway, 5s.; R. C. M'Gregor, 1s. 10d.; Thos. Tindale, 5s.; H. L. White, £3 1s. 6d.; and for the previous year the following should be acknowledged, namely:—W. V. Angove, 5s.; Miss Brumby, 5s.; G. Graham, 5s.; T. Iredale, 10s.; Colonel Legge, 10s.; Thos. Tindale, 5s.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF MR. F. L. WHITLOCK TO MR. H. L. WHITE (*written during September, 1908, from near Marble Bar, Western Australia*).—Stones and spinifex! spinifex and stones! ranges of hills red with granite and glare, or else huge barren flats, with nothing but spinifex, creeks lined with stunted and prickly shrubs; the only relief,

the line of gum-trees along the rivers and larger creeks, which in seasons like the present actually present the spectacle of bright, clear, running water! I cannot describe to you in adequate terms the roughness of some of these rocky creeks, where one must look before making a step, and where one is nearly driven mad by the tormenting swarms of bush flies, the sweltering heat and want of water. At the "Cajaputs" I found a nest of *Ptilotis carteri* with three eggs, one of which differs from the others. Without wishing to raise hopes that may not be realized, it will be well worth while to submit the odd egg to a Cuckoo expert for critical examination. I took one undoubted Cuckoo's egg in the nest of the White-vented Wood-Swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*). West of "Cajaput" camp lies a huge spinifex flat, with a big timbered creek running nearly parallel to the Coongan River. I had several Hawks' nests under observation along that creek. The first was a nest of the Little Eagle (*Nisaetus morphnoides*), at the top of a big, spreading gum-tree. The nest was about 55 feet above the bed of the creek and on rather a thin limb. However, the morning was calm, and I determined to try to scoop the eggs from the nest. With the aid of a fallen dead limb, and by cutting steps with a tomahawk, I reached the first branch, when down fell the scoop. I would not climb down that thick trunk again, so up I went, minus the scoop, until I could see right into the nest, which was on a horizontal limb of not too thick dimensions. I was determined to have those two eggs, so worked my way cautiously along the limb until the critical moment came. I had to let go with both hands and lean forward to grab the eggs. Fortunately the day was calm, and I got both eggs and myself safely down the tree. They are a perfect clutch, almost unspotted, and more pointed than the Irwin River specimens I sent you. The nest was about 2 feet in diameter, with a fairly deep cavity, lined with green eucalyptus leaves. I had a very satisfactory view of the parent birds, and their identity is beyond question. My next nest was that of the Striped Brown Hawk (*Hieracidea berigora*). Both parent birds were in a neighbouring tree, and allowed of a minute examination, so I did not shoot them. The nest contained two typical eggs. It was a hot day, and after these two climbs I was dry, so determined to make for a neighbouring pool of water. It was not long before I heard the curious notes of the Fawn-breasted Kingfisher (*Dacelo cervina*), so gave every likely-looking tree an inquiring thump with the back of my tomahawk. The result was unexpected, for in a very small side creek, with a few stunted gums growing in it, a hollow tree gave forth not only a Marbled Owl (*Ninox ocellata*), but also a Western Kestrel (*Cerchneis unicolor*). What with the heat, thirst, and two heavy climbs, I was too tired to do anything at the moment. I returned very early next morning, and after my inquiring knocks out popped the same birds

as before. I tomahawked my way up. The tree was very hollow and shaky, though still alive. On looking down the spout from which the Owl had flown I could just discern the three eggs; I chopped a hole accordingly, and secured them safely—a fine, perfect clutch. Then for the Kestrel. The end of the hollow limb from which the sitting bird had flown was dead; I broke this away and could then see the four beautiful eggs. I brought all down safely. My next objective point was Limestone Creek, another tributary of the Coongan River. *En route* I found my first nest of the Red Plumed-Pigeon (*Lophophaps ferruginea*); this was about 10 chains from the creek, on “white ground,” and where the spinifex was very short and sparse. I put the sitting bird off the nest, which was quite unconcealed and merely a little hollow lined with dry particles of spinifex. The two eggs are cream-coloured and elliptical in shape. *Re Astur cinereus*, it occurred to me to visit the old nest again, as in England the Sparrow-Hawk will lay again in the same nest after being robbed. I was not disappointed: the old bird was on, so up the tree I went and found two more lovely eggs; they could hardly be better marked. I knew the Chestnut-eared Finch (*Tæniopygia castanotis*) was breeding in the same tree—one nest was attached to the foundation of the Hawk’s nest, and contained one egg; but a surprise was in store. In a hollow spout was a second nest, and a blackboy who climbed the tree for me reported “Plenty egg in there,” at the same time throwing one out. I told him to come down, when, peeping in myself, I found no less than nineteen (19) eggs. I secured them as a curiosity. I have secured two more fine clutches of the Long-billed Magpie (*Gymnorhina longirostris*). Doves.—Several more perfect clutches of the Little Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*) and one clutch of the Barred-shouldered Dove (*Geopelia humeralis*). Owls.—History repeats itself. In hunting for a nest of *Dacelo cervina* I flushed another female of *Ninox ocellata* off her three eggs; these were heavily incubated. *Artamus*.—I have several beautiful clutches of *A. venustus*. With regard to the Little Wood-Swallow (*A. minor*), this species haunts the rockiest gullies in the whole district, and unless there are cliffs it does not occur. Of the nests in prospect, one is in an old nest of the Fairy Martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*); another in a very narrow cleft of rock—I can just get my hand in edgeways; another is in the hollow spout of a small gum-tree, and the fourth in a cleft of rock again. Parrots and Cockatoos.—No luck yet. Of the Rufous Bush-Lark (*Mirafraga woodwardi*) I found a nest, but, alas! it contained two well-grown young ones. *Cisticola*.—This is a very cunning bird. I have a pair under observation, and still hope to get eggs, as it may be a new species. No signs of Carter Desert-Bird (*Eremiornis carteri*) yet, but the flat where I think this species might occur is of such vast extent that I may yet find the birds.