

BLACK OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hæmatopus unicolor*).

PIED OYSTER-CATCHER (*H. longirostris*).—Numerous and evenly distributed; many nests.

SILVER GULL (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*).—Some small rookeries examined. Appeared to be a very large one at north end of Albatross Island. The eggs of this species are taken in numbers by islanders and sailors, and eaten.

LITTLE PENGUIN (*Eudyptula minor*).—Great numbers everywhere.

REEF-HERON (*Demigretta sacra*).—I was delighted at finding the nest of this, to me, rare bird; only one bird, a white one, was seen at the nest, which was situated under a leaning rock, well hidden and sheltered on what was practically a tidal island. The eggs (two) were partly incubated. The nest was a fairly thick ply of tussock-grass mixed with seaweed. According to the experience of the lad who was with me and found the nest, two eggs constitute the full clutch. Colouration of Reef-Herons is remarkable. Mr. Atkinson, who has had many years' experience with the species, has seen blue and white birds mated, but never a pied one. His opinion is that a Reef-Heron carries its first dress all its life. The islander agreed with this, and stated that, though birds of mixed colours have been seen mated, such an occurrence is rare. He knew of localities where three pairs, all white birds, nested. In other places the birds are all of the blue variety.

SOOTY CROW-SHRIKE (*Strepera fuliginosa*).—Very numerous on all the large islands, where its loud, raucous notes were frequently heard, more especially in the morning. We examined about 20 nests, but, in most cases, were too early.

WHITE-FACED STORM-PETREL (*Pelagodroma marina*).—Two fresh eggs were taken on 3rd November, on Penguin Island.

HOODED AND RED-CAPPED DOTTRELS.—Several nests of these little trippers were seen, in the usual situations.

[Messrs. Armstrong and Atkinson were fortunate in obtaining a landing on Albatross Island. It will be remembered that the members of the A.O.U. expedition last year were unable to land there through stress of weather (*Emu*, viii., p. 197, and Plate XVI.) An interesting account of the Albatrosses on this islet, by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S., was published in *The Ibis* (1895); and subsequently another account, by Mr. J. Gabriel and the late Mr. H. P. C. Ashworth, appeared in *The Victorian Naturalist* (1896).—Eds.]

First Bird Day in the Commonwealth.

BY H. W. WILSON, MELBOURNE.

THE value of birds to a country, and especially to an agricultural country, cannot be too highly estimated, but it cannot be said that sufficient interest is taken in our avifauna by the community as a whole to prevent its suffering through the ignorance or thoughtlessness of both young and old. The vast amount of good accomplished in arousing in the children an interest in the study of trees and care of gardens by the institution of Arbor Day in State schools led members of the A.O.U. to the conclusion that the institution of a Bird Day might probably produce a similar result with regard to bird life. The

proposal to hold a Bird Day in schools was brought under the notice of the Minister of Public Instruction (the Hon. A. A. Billson) and the Director of Education (Mr. F. Tate, M.A.), and they, perceiving the value of such a movement, gave their approval and support. The result was that the Minister issued instructions that the first Bird Day should be held on the 29th October, 1909, in all the schools throughout Victoria. A special programme for the afternoon was suggested, and one of its chief features was a field excursion to the haunts of birds, a copy of the list of birds seen, and also a copy of the school "bird list" to be forwarded to the Education Office.

Bird Day was a great success. The reports from all parts of the State show that the enthusiasm of the parents, children, and teachers was unbounded, that the work done in the last few months has enormously increased the knowledge and love of bird life, and that it is impossible to estimate the value of the movement and the amount of good that will result from it. It has opened the eyes of many to the value of the birds, and has shown what a fascinating study they are. Its effect on the minds of the children will be lasting and productive of great good. Schools report that from 20 to 200 nests have been noted this season, and a pleasing feature of the reports is that the teachers "confidently assert that no birds or their eggs have been harmed during this nesting season." Many instances of "bush tragedies" among the birds, in which the children evinced much sympathy and solicitude for the sufferers, are reported.

These results have not been achieved without much labour on the part of those who have guided the movement. In the first place the children and teachers had to be educated in the nomenclature of the birds, and the foundation of this was laid when the "Descriptive List of the Birds of Victoria" was sent to every school in the State in December, 1908. This list was compiled by Mr. J. A. Leach, M.Sc., Organizing Inspector of Nature Study, with assistance from members of the A.O.U., the Bird Observers' Club, and other bird-lovers. Then the illustrated articles on bird life published in *The Education Gazette* have supplied further information, and helped to keep the interest alive. *The School Paper* for October, which was a Bird Day number, and consisted mainly of illustrated articles on all phases of bird life, written by members of the A.O.U. and B.O.C., greatly aroused the interest and stimulated the children in their bird studies.

Thus for the past few months special attention has been directed to bird life, and when Bird Day arrived parents, children, and teachers and friends met together and made it a splendid success.

In the country districts excursions were made to the haunts of the birds. In the metropolitan schools the programme

suggested was as far as possible carried out; but, instead of an excursion, members of the A.O.U., B.O.C., and other bird-lovers each visited two or three schools and addressed the children on the value and interest of birds. These addresses were illustrated by specimens, and in some instances by the lantern. All certify to the interest and attention with which the children received the addresses.

Thousands of lists and reports have been received, and the information contained in them is being tabulated. This work has not yet been completed, but it is certain that much practical work of scientific value was accomplished through the Bird Day movement.

"To deepen the interest in bird life and to lead to a closer study of our native birds, it is proposed to establish a league amongst the pupils of our schools on the lines of a similar society in America. There the society is named after their great bird-lover, Audubon. So it is proposed to establish on similar lines 'The Gould League of Bird-Lovers,' associated with the name of that distinguished ornithologist, John Gould, who did so much in describing the birds of the world."—*Education Gazette*, 20/10/09. The aims of the proposed society were explained to the children on Bird Day, and they were asked if they wished to become members. The response was remarkable. The idea of forming the "Gould League of Bird-Lovers" was put forward by Dr. H. W. Bryant, A.O.U., who wrote to the Department of Education concerning the formation of such a league, and the Director of Education, Mr. F. Tate, M.A., approved of the idea. A committee of members of the A.O.U. has the matter in hand, and a suitable card of membership is being prepared. His Excellency the Governor, Sir Thomas Gibson-Carmichael, has consented to become a patron of the League, as also have many leading public and scientific men.

The following members of the A.O.U. and others visited schools on Bird Day and gave addresses to the higher classes:—Mrs. Hardy, Miss Fenton, Dr. H. W. Bryant, Dr. G. Horne, Messrs. A. J. Campbell, D. Le Souëf, Donald Macdonald, A. H. E. Mattingley, Chas. Barrett, E. B. Nicholls, C. F. Cole, F. E. Howe, J. A. Leach, G. E. Shepherd, F. G. A. Barnard, G. B. Pritchard, F.G.S., and H. W. Wilson. Messrs. J. Gabriel, Keartland, Coles, Townsend, and James also helped, and Mr. C. French described the birds in his collection to the numerous visitors. The following were the contributors to the October, 1909 (Bird Day) number of *The School Paper*:—Miss J. A. Fletcher, Messrs. Donald Macdonald, T. H. Tregellas, Robert Hall, Chas. Barrett, W. H. D. Le Souëf, L. G. Chandler, W. Gillies, E. B. Nicholls, A. H. E. Mattingley, L. C. Cook, J. W. Mellor, F. Howe, C. F. Cole, A. G. Campbell, and Dr. W. MacGillivray.