

## Review.

["Scientific Notes on an Expedition into the Interior of Australia, carried out by Captain S. A. White, M.B.O.U., from July to October, 1913."]

CAPTAIN S. A. White, M.B.O.U., president of the R.A.O.U., is to be heartily congratulated on the publication in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. xxxviii., 1914, of the scientific results of the adventuresome camel trip made by his devoted wife and himself into the "Dead Heart of Australia."

Captain White has supplied the interesting narrative of the expedition and the valuable ornithological notes. Fourteen other scientists, whose names are well known in their several fields of science, report on the general zoological, botanical, and geological collections. Important results were achieved, and many species and sub-species new to science were obtained. A fine series of beautiful photographs illustrates some unique features of that remarkable region.

Painstaking, thorough, and scientific, this successful work enhances Captain White's reputation as one of Australasia's leading field ornithologists.

## Stray Feathers.

**Bird-Observing in Uganda.**—Many members of the R.A.O.U. know Mr. C. F. Belcher personally, and his name must be familiar to all. Mr. Belcher was formerly co-editor of *The Emu*, and he has done much for the Union. He now holds a high official position in Uganda, and in a letter from Entebbe, dated 6th May, 1915, to Mr. H. A. Purnell, R.A.O.U., of Geelong, Vic., gives some interesting notes on the bird life of that part of the Empire.

"The Governor has a magnificent collection (of eggs), and I have learned all I know of Uganda birds from him," writes Mr. Belcher. "This is really a marvellous bird country, because, if you travel 10 or 20 miles you seem to run into quite a fresh lot. And then there are some birds breeding at any time of the year you can think of, though just now, in the big rains, is the time when most are laying, and there is a second pretty extensive laying about November, in the small rains. Curiously enough, though I must by now have noted well over 200 species in Entebbe, I have only the eggs of twenty. I will try and list them from memory:—Cormorants (3), Heron (1), Kingfisher (1), Coly (1), Swallows (4), Weavers (8), Plover (1), Shrike (1), Bulbul (1), Zosterops (1), Sun-Birds (3), Warblers (2), Lark (1), Weaver-Finches (3). But, of course, these were all taken practically in the township, most of them in streets and gardens. The Cormorants I got from an island about a mile away, which H.E. and I have visited several times—the most recent being yesterday evening. Rather, I should say it is a group of islets, and the Heron and

Cormorant rookery is in ambatch (a sort of bean, like a prickly acacia), growing in the shallow water off the largest islet. These bushes arc about 6 or 7 feet out of the water only, rather as Mangroves grow. You have to put on waders, or you would be scratched to bits, and even then the climbing about on the prickly branches is rather a task. I should say there were about a hundred nests of the Cow Egret (*Bubulcus*), half a dozen of the Egret (*Garzetta*), thirty each of the big Cormorant and the Darter, and a few of the Little Cormorant. Of course, the Cormorants are different from yours, though the Darter seems very close to the Australian bird.

"The colours of the birds just here are nothing marvellous, except for the Sun-Birds, but very many have good singing powers, and the nests of most, especially Flycatchers, are beautiful. . . . I think I told you there were eight Swallows here; well, counting Martins, there are nearer twelve. Last Saturday alone, on a canoe trip with H.E., upon an arm of the lake, I saw seven species of different kinds of birds new to me. You can imagine what a glorious place for bird-lovers it is, once you get to know a little about the species. Of course, if Sir Frederick Jackson were not here I should have taken years to find out what, as it is, I have learned in seven months."

\* \* \*

**Restless Flycatcher's Notes.** — *Apr*opos of the notes from Western Australia regarding the Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*),\* it is a most curious thing that so many prominent ornithologists were of Gilbert's opinion that the "scissors-grinding" sounds are "only emitted while the bird is in a hovering position a few feet from the ground." Mr. Robert Hall and Dr. J. A. Leach both passed this belief on, and Captain S. A. White remarked † that, on Eyre Peninsula, he learned that *Seisura* "only makes the strange grinding noise when hovering over the ground." Consequent on this latter observation, Captain White published in *The Emu* a little later ‡ a note I sent him, reporting the Flycatcher as "whirring" both while perched on the ground and on stumps. And now comes corroboration from the West! In the three years intervening I have, however, come to regard it as a commonplace to hear the Restless Flycatcher "wheezing" ecstatically while sitting still. The last instance of the kind came under my notice a few days ago (1st August); but this was rather remarkable from the fact that the Flycatcher in question had an Australian Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*) dancing attendance upon it. Occasionally the two birds would perch about one foot apart on a fence rail, while *Seisura inquieta* whirred and the Brown Flycatcher kept a wary eye on the ground. And everywhere the Restless Flycatcher went the little brown bird followed.

\* *Emu*, vol. xv., part 1, pp. 53, 54.

† *Emu*, vol. xii., part 1, p. 4.

‡ *Emu*, vol. xii., part 2, p. 134.

Query—Did the Brown Flycatcher follow the larger bird to secure insects disturbed by the "scissors-grinding" notes? It really seemed so, for the Restless Flycatcher did not altogether approve of the partnership, and tried to chase his attendant away more than once. But the latter was not to be denied, and the two were together till I lost sight of them.

On another occasion I had an opportunity of seeing a Restless Flycatcher at close range. The grinding notes began very low, seeming to come from right down in the bird's throat, and gradually worked up to full strength, when the bill was gaping wide like that of a brooding bird suffering from the heat. As characteristic as the rasping notes, too, are the *calls* of the Restless Flycatcher; I do not think that the "whirring extraordinary" is in any sense a call. The most common of these is a note that would be phonetically expressed as "Britch"—usually uttered while the bird is zigzagging over the tree-tops—and next comes a penetrating pipe, "Pee-pee-pee, towhee-tweet-tweet." A *Seisura* that I frequently saw and heard calling thus while perched on headstones in a cemetery did not seem at all out of place. In its nesting the Restless Flycatcher is by no means so business-like or neat as the bird it is often mistaken for, *Rhipidura motacilloides*. Last spring I knew of an orchard wherein a pair of each species began building at the same time. The Black-and-White Fantail's nest rapidly took form, but the Flycatchers could not get fairly going. They would scratch about on the dry branchlet selected as the nesting-site, but could not get the fibres to stay in position against the strong breezes, and finally gave up the attempt. Earlier in the same season I saw other Restless Flycatchers similarly troubled, for the winds ran high in the dry spring of last year. One pair was twice thwarted in an endeavour to build, but succeeded on the third attempt (in a new position), whereupon a pair of Black-and-White Fantails built in the same tree, on the identical spot that the Flycatchers had unsuccessfully selected in their second attempt. —A. H. CHISHOLM. Maryborough (Vic.), 6/8/15.

---

### From Magazines, &c.

**Nest Built in Trench.**—Corporal Percy Smith, in a letter, dated 10th June, from Gallipoli, to a friend in Bendigo, which was published in the Melbourne *Herald* of 7th August, 1915, states that a bird's nest was found in a trench in which a shell had just burst. "Strange things happen in the trenches at times," he writes. "One of the most extraordinary was the finding of a bird's nest with four eggs. While going through the communication trenches a small bird was seen to fly out of the side, and I began to look where it came from. A shell had burst in the trench, and dirt had fallen off the sides. Among the larger pieces of earth