

Bird Notes from Dookie.

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MANY and great changes have taken place in the bird-life of this district since I first came here in 1887. In the fields below the College I have seen the Native Companions in their quaint dance in quite great numbers; now not a solitary one has graced the scene for years. The Wild Turkey (Bustard) shuns the neighbourhood; yet at one time a few could be seen. Stilts, Grebes, and Dabchicks, and some Gull-like birds were plentiful on the swamps; now none deigns to visit them. I have not seen a Leatherhead here for years; yet at one time they were plentiful, and took toll of the grapes when ripe. That terror of chickens, the Derwent Jackass (Australian Butcher-Bird), has fled the scene, but the Kookaburra still laughs in chorus, and the small Kingfisher, with its sheeny plumage, may be seen darting here and hither, near the Broken River. Occasional Bee-eaters, too, nest about there, though I have not seen a burrow for ages. Miners, whose voice used to irritate me, are so scarce now that when I hear one I feel inclined to write a stanza of poetry to old remembrances waked. I was called back to youth a few days ago hearing the note of the Red Lory (Crimson Parrot), and saw one or two, and a few green ones. They have gone onward. The Native Thrush's beautiful note I hear each year for a month or so, and I am grateful. Thank heaven the Magpie still carols on the tree-tops! I know no note that breathes so much of freedom and *joie de vivre*. It must be in the air, for Australian character seems to be embodied in that note. How those birds dare an intruder near their nests! Those lethal baits for rabbits have thinned their ranks terribly. Even Crows are passing hence. Eagles used to nest in the high trees not half a mile away, but for twenty years there has not been one nest built about here. The birds still can be seen, but the deadly breechloader carries the message of death to each one coming within shot. The smaller Hawks are becoming fewer the more enthusiastic the poultry men become. Possibly, with eggs at 3s. a dozen, as they were a little time ago, the mental worry, time, and shot and powder are being paid for. Like the blacks, bird-life is dwindling fast. Cockatoos and Galahs are still numerous, but when one sees a hundred or more dead ones scattered over a field, their time will come, and their chief will say, "Let us depart in peace." The wise old ancients of the flock will moralize together and say in sorrow, "And this is civilization!" Rosellas but a few years back were in thousands; now only a few pairs may be seen. Grass (Red-backed) Parrots still seem to hold out. An occasional Woodpecker (Tree-creeper), may be still seen, and a few impudent "Willie Wagtails" (Black-and-White Fantail). I even saw a pair of Stone-Plovers last Saturday on a lonely hill, and a few Water-Hens among the reeds by the river-bank. A Rail has not appeared for many years. There are several kinds of Robins

about each year, mostly the Red-capped. The pretty Blue-capped Wren still delights us, and passing flocks of Love-Birds (Budgerigars) and Cockatoo-Parrots. The latter reminded me of my youth when I stuffed birds. I was at Connewarre, shooting birds to stuff, and I saw on the fence two birds that I had not seen before. I shot both at one shot. I had not gone far when the late Mr. Andrew White rode up at a gallop and called out to me, with a rather convincing mien, "I have just let go two Cockatoo-Parrots. If you shoot them, I'll use this stockwhip on you until you'll wish you were in heaven." I felt my knees a bit wobbly, and a silent prayer went up that he would not look in my bag. He did not. I left Connewarre out of my shooting itinerary for a whole year. I learned the name of the birds, though. Now, every time I see one my thoughts flash back to the summertime of youth. The poetry of bird-life will be lost to generations of youth in the near future. Beautiful birds will only appeal as myths, or disembodied spirits. The past will be measured by their present bird-life, such as Starlings, Sparrows, and birds every man's hand is against. What a vast amount of happy imagery will be lost! Materialism gloats over the sacrifice. "Man's Place in Nature" should have in the appendix "Birds' Place in Nature." There is no doubt the Education Department has saved the lives of thousands of birds through the efforts of the bird-lovers among the teachers. Still, it is decreed that until the wood-lot on the farm is a fact instead of a fetich bird-life will almost be a memory. The leaden interest by the community generally in reafforestation is more than a pity—it's a calamity to any country, and a positive millstone around the neck of the most willing Government. Unless the people generally and individually act as guardians to great national interests, the wealth expended on them is worse than lost.

Stray Feathers.

Long-lived Corella.—Mr. R. Eastway, of Sydney, has in his possession a Corella that has been in the family for 35 years, and has every year for that time laid three eggs.—A. S. LE SOUFFE. Taronga Park, Sydney, N.S.W. 8/9/20.

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Acclimatized Birds in Tasmania.—There are many acclimatized birds, such as Sparrows, Goldfinches, and Starlings, here. Orchardists complain about the latter bird, but on the pastoral areas the Starling has been the salvation of many properties, as it has cleared out the small snail which acts as a host to the fluke. European Skylarks have only reached here during the last six years, and are increasing.—CHAS. BURBURY. Hobart (Tas.)