

The cabin is situated about two miles from Waterfall railway station, and close to one of the best areas of brush in the reservation. It should assist us materially in working out life histories of the birds in the park, and we hope to use it to good advantage during the coming spring. We hope also to have co-operation at suitable times from workers in other classes of wild life.

At the same meeting preliminary arrangements were made for preparing a working List of the Birds of New South Wales.

Correspondence.

THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF COMPARATIVE OOLOGY.

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—The action taken by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union in Congress assembled, October 22nd, 1924, is a serious matter. Upon the gratuitous assumption of illegal intent upon our part, this learned body publicly arraigns one of its own members, previously unadvised, stigmatizes a sister institution of science, and virtually threatens an important section of its own members with ex-communication. The crassness and the injustice of this attack alike stagger belief.

In the report of the October meeting *The Emu*, January, 1925, p. 196, says: "Those who had seen the first number of the 'Comparative Oologist,' the Journal of the International Museum, stated that members of the museum were expected to contribute eggs of the value of ten dollars annually, and that the authorities of the museum promised not to publish lists of the eggs received from contributors for fear of prejudicing their interests. This appeared to imply that members were expected to disregard the law in order to secure rare eggs for the Museum." The insinuation and bias of this report will be manifest upon the perusal of the offending paragraph, which reads as follows:

"The management of the International Museum of Comparative Oology undertakes to furnish to its membership annually an exact accounting of all receipts and expenditures, both oological and financial; but it will not make specific report of oological contributions for public use, save by general inclusion, or for purposes of scientific review. In particular, it requests permission to report specifically and *confidentially* the exact receipts through Member contributions; but even in this case we will refrain upon express injunction, if such publication is thought likely to be prejudicial to any member's interest."

Note that the only reports ever contemplated were those to be circulated among the members, who alone have presumptive interest in such details. The specific embarrassment feared, and one which has actually been protested, is that members reporting to us rare takes would be overwhelmed by requests from fellow members for similar material. That we ever contemplated operations outside the pale of the law is a gratuitous assumption which could only have

originated in prejudiced and *ex-parte* councils. We have never been party to, nor have ever contemplated any illegal operations whatsoever, and we call publicly upon all our membership to bear out this statement. If we were bent upon evading the laws (however oppressive at times) do you suppose that this institution, now (with its predecessor) in its tenth year, would still lack the egg of the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*)? Two-thirds of the existing members of this noble race nest within a one-hundred mile radius of this institution, yet we have sternly refused to be a party to, or to profit by, the various illicit operations by which the eggs of this vanishing race have found their way into various collections. Personally, we believe that the interests of science and of posterity would be better served if we were permitted to secure an example of the egg before it is too late. But we are abiding by the decision of the law and of its lawfully appointed custodians.

Of course, if the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union sees fit to stigmatize egg-collecting *per se*, or to instruct its membership, from the president down, how they shall behave in respect to their scientific affiliations, that is its privilege; but the resolution as worded I hold to be an open insult, and this action unworthy of the traditions of English gentlemen.

International Museum of
Comparative Oology,
Santa Barbara, California.

Very truly yours,
WILLIAM LEON DAWSON,
May 7, 1925.

[The resolution to which Mr. Dawson objects reads as follows:—
"That it is undesirable that any member of the R.A.O.U. be a member of or subscriber to the International Museum of Comparative Oology of Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A." We think it is an exaggeration on the part of Mr. Dawson to describe this as "virtually threatening an important section of members of the R.A.O.U. with ex-communication," and it is certain that those responsible for the motion did not intend "to stigmatize egg-collecting, *per se*," since both the mover and seconder of the motion are themselves collectors.

We cannot of course speak authoritatively as to the motives which led those present at the last annual meeting of the R.A.O.U. to vote for this motion. It is evident that there was considerable misapprehension on the subject of the *confidential* reports, and members will be pleased to have Mr. Dawson's emphatic disclaimer that these were intended to hide illegal operations. Since it is now illegal to export natural history specimens, including bird's eggs, from Australia, unless special permission is obtained from the Minister for Customs, Mr. Dawson cannot expect to receive many Australian bird's eggs for his Museum. We think it probable that the strong feeling in favour of preserving valuable Australian specimens in Australia, which led to the prohibition just mentioned, was the main cause why the motion was carried. Members probably felt that while Australian Museums mostly suffer seriously from lack of funds and while their collections are still mostly sadly imperfect, it would be unpatriotic of residents in Australia to pledge themselves to contribute to a foreign institution.—*Editor.*]