

same species, but *N. castaneum* and *N. gibberifrons* are regarded as distinct species.

In 1920, there follows Mathews' and Iredale's *Name List of the Birds of N.Z.* (*Austral Avian Record*, Vol. IV., pp. 49-64.) Unfortunately, here the matter is made chaotic. They enumerate both *Virago gibberifrons* (Müller, 1842, *Anas*) Grey Teal, and *Virago castanea* (Eyton, 1838, *Mareca*) Green-headed Teal. But note the vernacular names!

In October, 1925, I drew the attention of Mr. W. R. B. Oliver, of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, to a specimen labelled in that museum *Virago castaneum* (Grey Teal) Wairarapa Lake. Mr. Oliver replied that "the specimen is a female, but males have been taken from the same locality and they are identical in colouration with the females. The species, therefore, is *Gibberifrons* and not *Castaneum*." He added that the bird is apparently established in New Zealand, as Mr. O'Connor (an authority on N.Z. birds) states that it breeds somewhere near Wairarapa Lake.

From the chaos created in the past, I can find no valid record of the occurrence in New Zealand of *Nettion castaneum*. That species must therefore be omitted from the New Zealand list. Mr. Oliver agrees with me in the matter. The species entitled to be included in the N.Z. list is *Virago gibberifrons* (Müller, 1842, *Anas*) Grey Teal

## Protection of Australian Birds.

By J. NEIL MCGILP, R.A.O.U., King's Park, Adelaide.

THANKS are due to Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley for his summing-up in the January *Emu* of the case for the protection of birds.

Most of us desire to ensure the preservation of our useful and characteristic native animals; though, unfortunately, some of us may disagree from others as to the right course to pursue to secure this. Some are apt to take offence from "straight talk," and though all ornithologists should be united in the endeavour to protect our useful and interesting birds, we now apparently only agree to differ. So an actual scheme for the preservation of Australian birds remains in abeyance.

Is it not time that we realized our responsibilities and set to work to try to save our fast disappearing fauna? It is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all. After carefully reviewing the position, I am sure that if all our energies are expended upon sanctuaries, we will reap the best result. It is not much use making reserves close to the cities and expecting birds that have long ago been driven out before the increased human population, to return to such reserves. We have destroyed the feeding-grounds of the birds and we cannot give them suitable conditions. There is a far better prospect of saving the birds if we see to it that in all new country opened up there is an extensive area set apart as a sanctuary for birds.

As a matter of cold fact, the opening-up of country for settlement re-

duces the number of some species of birds, but it increases the number of other species. Cleared land calls for Magpies, Larks, Plovers, etc.; but it loses the Honeyeaters and scrub birds; while the former species increase, the birds requiring timber decrease. It is the survival of the fittest over again; only those birds that can adapt themselves to the altered conditions can survive and hold their own. Unfortunately, in Australia we have some birds that cannot adapt themselves to the altered conditions caused by man with his plough and domestic stock. In our main cities, I think, the area now built upon did not carry more birds in its natural state than it does to-day. True, many species have been driven out, but others have increased. As one traverses the streets, few birds are noticed, but in the gardens and parks we seldom fail to find birds. I do not speak of introduced birds. Those introduced species have adapted themselves to circumstances and have increased so greatly that they have become pests. It is also possible for many Australian birds to increase to such an extent as to become pests.

Mr. Mattingley wants us to ask ourselves, "Has man been placed upon this planet to use fairly nature's gifts?" and wants an expression of opinion as to the meaning of "live and let live." To the former, one without hesitation answers, "Yes." The Almighty placed aborigines on this continent and provided them with food in the shape of plant and animal life. We were brought to life to make the most of nature's gifts—the greatest of which is our fair Australia. Is it conceivable that the Almighty meant us to leave our country undeveloped, to let the land remain in its virgin state? If so, we should hand it back to the original occupants of Australia or their offspring, and leave all the timbered lands alone for the birds and other animals. Was not Australia given to us as a talent? It is up to us to make the best use of it.

Birds were given to us for assistance in our labour. If we reduce our hired labour below minimum requirements, we fail to do the best with our heritage; birds are workers for us. If we destroy them beyond the minimum required, we suffer. Some birds were undoubtedly given us to provide food. Now, every stock-breeder knows that when more than his annual increase is killed off every year, the flock or herd will soon cease to exist. If the breeding flock is diminished, we must either reduce our demand upon it or purchase more stock. So it is with our game birds, as their numbers decrease so must our demands be reduced or the end is in sight. A supply suitable for 1,000,000 people is not likely to serve 5,000,000 people very long.

To keep all our birds at the present-day level we must let Australia stay as it is to-day. Are we justified in doing this? If we are to prosper and increase our kind upon this land we must develop our resources; this means the further thinning out of scrub-lands and the reduction of special kinds of birds. With room for only a certain number of birds, is it not advisable to attempt to hold on to those that are valuable and harmless to us? Why should we try to save birds that are recognized as pests? Again, many of our birds will

probably become extinct, notwithstanding that we pass all the laws possible to protect them. Failing a law to stop development of our land, it is probable that nothing will save these birds. They cannot live in the altered conditions caused by clearing the land.

Therefore, the matter of the moment is the preservation of the birds that are of value and not harmful to us. Let us formulate a scheme that will have for its main point the preservation of the known useful birds; such birds soon become known for the good they do. Land-owners could, without injustice, be asked to protect these birds. It is not wise to ask them to give protection to birds or other animals that they know to be pests; it only makes them into adversaries to our endeavours to protect birds. Allow them to judge which are destructive animals.

Thus, if the members of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union will give me this privilege of preserving useful and harmless birds and of reducing what I consider destructive animals, they are at liberty to have my station of 1000 square miles of country, leased from the South Australian Government, declared a reserve for native birds and other indigenous animals. I require the right to destroy any bird or other animal that I consider a pest. I will undertake to protect all the other native animals to the best of my ability. I have for years protected kangaroos, with the result that to-day they are in such numbers as to be a pest, and it is costing me money to reduce the surplus. If I protect birds till they become so numerous as to be a pest, I surely have the right to kill off any surplus. No broad-minded person can expect me to allow my station to become a kangaroo-run, or to suffer from the depredations of any animal that I have protected so well that, by their increase, they have become pests.

I believe there are many land-owners, like myself, recognising the need of birds, who will offer their holdings as reserves so long as they have the right to kill any animal which has unduly increased, or any animals they consider pests. If we ask for a fair thing from land-owners, we can hope for success. Many protect useful and harmless birds to-day and will gladly co-operate with us in any scheme to preserve such native birds.

I ask for a better understanding of the position, for the co-operation of all who are interested in the welfare of our Australian birds and for the cessation of disputes over what are, after all, trivial matters. We cannot prevent the destruction of birds by drought, fire, or occupation of land by settlers, but if we can show the settlers the need of preservation of many of our birds, they will, in their own interests, see to it that all birds not harmful to them, will have a full measure of protection. This indeed is true protection with a hope of preservation. We must have a place in every district where birds can breed. As a matter of fact, the time has come when we must breed more stock. To do this, we must have reserves, preferably those controlled by private individuals, or by a body interested in the birds.