

The following birds were seen but not positively identified:—

Bronzewing (*Phaps*, sp.).

Grebe (*Podiceps*, sp.).

Albatross (? *Diomedea melanophris*).

*Pelagodroma marina* (White-faced Storm Petrel) was represented by the dead specimen referred to.

## The Oil Menace in Australia

By A. H. E. MATTINGLEY, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.

The menace to birds, as well as to some forms of marine life, by the discharge of oil from motor ships and from other sources has recently\* become more pronounced in Australian waters. This is due to the number of oil-burning ships arriving from abroad, which ships discharge the waste oil at the entrance to harbours, and even in them at times, and also along the Australian littoral. Some of the oil is wafted by the tide into our bays and harbours, many of which places form the breeding habitat of fishes and birds. Birds whose plumage has been befouled by the oil have been found either dead or dying, particularly birds such as Penguins and similar water birds that obtain their food by alighting on the coastal waters.

Birds suffer, not only directly by the befouling of their plumage, but also indirectly through the destruction of the plankton, the name by which the small marine organisms that frequent the surface of the ocean are known. Some of those forms, such as "whales' food", a species of floating crustacea, which the Shearwaters or Muttonbirds feed upon, and other minute forms beloved by other Petrels, are destroyed, as well as some of the eggs of pelagic fishes. The destruction of the plankton life will be reflected in a diminution of the food supply of our fishes, and also in the destruction of their ova or potential fishes. This will detrimentally affect the domestic economy of the populace of the Commonwealth.

Since most of the motor ships are owned abroad, it is suggested that action be taken to bring the matter under the notice of the Commonwealth Government. It is also suggested that all waste oil should be destroyed by fire or some other means ashore, and that any vessel found to have discharged oil on waters within the territorial limits of the Commonwealth Government should be prevented entrance to our ports. It is further suggested that the Government of the Commonwealth be requested to

\*A society for preventing the discharge of oil on ocean waters has been operating for some time.—Ed.

bring the matter before the other Governments of the world, with the object of having international action taken to prevent this destruction of one of the potential food supplies of the human race here, since fish food contains phosphates, which Australians need, because the soils of Australia, to some extent, lack a proper supply of phosphorus. The loss of phosphates in our local food supply is compensated by the use of fish as a diet, so our fisheries should be jealously guarded against interference by oil or other destructive agencies. It should be remembered that oil discharged on the surface of the ocean is practically indestructible, and in time much of the surface of the ocean will be covered with a film of oil unless some action is taken to overcome the discharge of oil on its surface.

The oil menace in Australia is at present in its infancy, but the infant is growing. Preventive legislative action is needed before further damage is done to our beaches and to our fauna.

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## Report on R.A.O.U. Library

In the course of twelve months a number of important publications, dealing with ornithology in Australia and foreign countries, have been received and reviewed in the pages of *The Emu*. Amongst the Australian literature may be mentioned Cayley's *What Bird is That?*, a work which, owing to the amount of information contained in its pages, must prove an invaluable guide to the field worker. *Nature Fantasy in Australia*, by A. H. Chisholm, is another work that will have a strong appeal to bird-lovers, both in Australia and overseas.

Through the generosity of Dr. A. Wetmore, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute in U.S.A., the R.A.O.U. library has been enriched by several important works, including various parts of Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*, the eighth and concluding volume of Ridgeway's *Birds of North and Middle America*, and a number of other works dealing with the birds of North and South America. The thanks of the Council are also due to the secretaries of several ornithological societies who have been good enough to supply copies of journals of their respective societies which were missing from the sets in our library. It can now be reported that complete files of the following journals (hitherto incomplete) from 1901 at least are in the library:—*Avicultural Magazine*, *The Auk*, *The Ibis*, and *The Condor*. By means of exchange we were able to obtain from the trustees