

as the time of the northwards movement, and August to October as the period of the journeying south.

The numbered birds already dealt with now total 651—others included (un-numbered) are sporadic or other similar records.—C.E.B.

Correspondence

To the Editor

Sir,—There has been a good deal of controversy lately with regard to scientific collecting. It must be admitted that a lot of harm is done by some collectors, but we must not lose sight of the other side of the question. The gaps in our knowledge, even of the commoner species, are very considerable, and many of them can be filled only by collecting specimens.

I would suggest that, while collecting as a whole be discouraged, those who do collect should concentrate on the least-known phases of our bird life. Everyone knows, for instance, that there is a red mutation in the eggs of the Silver Gull, or that two Lyrebirds sometimes lay together in one nest, but nevertheless, I have no hesitation in saying that there are some habits of all our birds that are practically unknown. Usually a supply of patience will repay a naturalist much more surely than a dexterity with the skinning-knife or collecting box.

There are some who claim that there is no need for an ornithologist to be a collector at all. Be that as it may, how many prominent field-workers are there in Australia who have not been collectors at some period of their career?

In the life of every collector there are several stages to be gone through. The schoolboy knows little about birds, but he often plunders every nest he finds for the sake of the eggs. After a time the novelty wears off, and he either drops his hobby altogether, or takes it up in earnest. In the latter case he will take a great deal of trouble in collecting and preparing specimens, under the impression that he is acting in the interests of science. After a while he realizes his error; he has been wasting his time as far as discovering new facts is concerned, but he has acquired a habit of accuracy which is invaluable. He will now turn his attention to some particular branch of ornithology, and, benefiting by former mistakes, will become a valuable worker. As such he is worthy of encouragement. While we deplore the existence of the schoolboy collector, we must remember that he is the ornithologist of the future. The worst enemy of our birds is the vandal who tries to make money out of them, or who kills and robs for the mere sake of killing and robbing.—Yours, etc.,

A. C. CAMERON.

"Aughamore," Biddeston, via Oakey, Qld., 4 6 33.