

New Species In Newspapers

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In *The Emu*, vol. XXIX, 1929, p. 81, Mr. A. H. Chisholm discussed "Australia's Lorilet Puzzle," and brought to light Ramsay's original description of *Cyclopsitta macleayana* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of November 5, 1874. References to this description had been misquoted and lost sight of for more than fifty years. As a matter of fact, I find that Ramsay also published his description almost simultaneously in the *Sydney Mail*—November 7, 1874, p. 587. Because of their obscure places of publication, it is difficult to trace descriptions of new species of Australian birds in newspapers, but when such are encountered they are worth recording, as some workers are of the opinion that names should date from these early introductions because other media of publication were not then available in Australia. The reports of some of our scientific societies, such as the Queensland Philosophical Society, the Horticultural Society of New South Wales, etc., were published in the press, sometimes being reprinted later.

In the course of some ichthyological research, when I found that such well-known Australian species as the Queensland lungfish, the devil ray, and the black marlin swordfish were described as new species in newspapers, I came across several bird descriptions, and, in some cases, their dates of publication are earlier than those given in our checklists.

Cinclosoma castonatus, *Halcyon pyrrhopygia* and *Columba* (*Peristera*) *histrionica* Gould, *Athenaeum* 672, September 12, 1840, p. 717. *Nomina nuda*.

Pedionomus ocellatus Gould, *Athenaeum* 679, October 31, 1840, p. 876. New genus and species, fully described.

Atricha clamosa Gould, *Athenaeum* 848, January 27, 1844, p. 90. Western Australia. New genus and species.

Casuarius australis Wall, *Illustrated Sydney News*, June 3, 1854, p. 88, and fig. Near Cape York.

The *Sydney Mail* of December 28, 1861, reprints from the *Singleton Times*, the following notes, which Mr. Tom Iredale considers perhaps refer to an abnormal Night-Heron:

"New description of ardea (bittern) has recently been found on the Bombargo swamp, Pullaming, Liverpool Plains, by Mr. W. C. Brown. Description: The head and neck white, upper surface greenish brown, interspersed with chestnut. Wings, greenish black, under surface dark brown, tips of the feathers white, legs flesh colour, inside pale yellow, and cere green. This bird is not described in any known work on ornithology."

Casuarius johnsonii F. Mueller, *Australian*, December 15, 1866. *vide* Mathews, *A List of the Birds of Australasia*, 1931, p. 3.

Orthonix spaldingii Ramsay, *Sydney Morning Herald*,

March 21, 1868, p. 4, bottom of column 6. North-east coast of Australia.

"I have named this new species after its discoverer, whose exertions have brought to light several other new species, which will hereafter be described."

Ptilotis frenata Ramsay, *Sydney Mail*, August 15, 1874, p. 201.

Eopsaltria inornata Ramsay, *Sydney Mail*, August 15, 1874, p. 201. "Buckingham Bay" = Rockingham Bay, Queensland.

Rhypidura superciliosa Ramsay, *Sydney Mail*, August 15, 1874, p. 201. Rockingham Bay.

Cyclopsitta macleayana Ramsay, *Sydney Mail*, November 7, 1874, p. 587. Near Cardwell. (See Chisholm, *The Emu*, vol. XXIX, 1929, p. 81.)

Corymbicola mestoni De Vis, *Brisbane Courier*, October 4, 1889. *vide* Mathews, *A List of the Birds of Australasia*, 1931, p. 447.

There are many interesting natural history articles, accounts of explorations, and biographies of naturalists, in the back files of newspapers, and probably more new species of such men as Diggles, Ramsay, and De Vis, may come to light with further reading. Papers quoted in this article were consulted at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and the Public Library, Melbourne.

Oyster-catchers in Company.—A few days ago, when a fellow-member, Mr. H. C. Thompson, and I were visiting an estuary a few miles from Devonport, we saw a much larger gathering of Oyster-catchers than either of us had previously come across. There were quite one hundred of the birds, most of them crowded together on a sand-spit just at the edge of the tide, on the look-out for small crustaceans or other food, just as the Silver Gulls stand at the edge of the waves watching for whatever fortune may send along. The great majority were of the Pied species (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*), but a few Sootys (*H. unicolor*) were mixed with the others. The red bills and attractive plumage made quite a charming spectacle in the afternoon sunshine. Mr. Cayley says in his bird-book, with regard to each species, "mostly singly or in pairs," and that had been our experience, so that it was quite pleasing to see such a gathering, and under ideal conditions.

Inland a little from the shore a great many coast honey-suckles (*Banksia marginata*) were in flower, and in them dozens of Brush Wattle-birds were feeding and uttering their series of comical notes. It was amusing to watch the squabbles going on between them and the White-bearded Honeyeaters in the same trees. The latter is a very truculent bird, but met his match in the Brush Wattle-birds—sometimes they would tumble out of the banksia together, falling to the ground still fighting.—H. STUART DOVE, Devonport, Tas., 11/5/38.