

where no type exists are a trouble and in many cases remain indeterminable. With a recognizable painting or drawing all doubt is removed.

We must bear in mind that all the important facts about the Lambert drawings have been public knowledge for ninety-nine years. Also that the latin name stands only on the latin diagnosis. In the case of *Turdus volitans* we find the diagnosis is: *T. supra niger subtus albas . . . capite colloque nigris . . . cauda elongata apice integra*. The words "capite colloque nigris" can apply only and accurately to the Willy Wagtail.—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Sydney, N.S.W., 15/7/42.

Correspondence

WHAT IS TURDUS VOLITANS LATHAM?

To the Editor,

Sir,

The onus is on Mr. Mathews to prove beyond doubt that Latham's description of *Turdus volitans* applies to the Black-and-white Fantail. His rejoinder (p. 63) fails to dispose of the arguments brought forward against that contention. I am surprised that he should lay such stress on Strickland's remark that it was from the Lambert drawings alone that Latham compiled the descriptions of the Australian birds treated in the *Second Supplement*, 1801. Surely it is unnecessary to remind him that Latham attributed his material not only to Lambert but to General Davies, John Hunter, the Leverian Museum, the British Museum and others. The fact that Latham wrote identifying names on the Lambert plates for the owner's edification cannot be taken to imply that they must all *ipso facto* be types of the species concerned. Take for instance Latham's description of the White-headed Finch, *Fringilla leucocephala* (= *Zonæginthus guttatus*), where he stated: "From the drawings of General Davies. Among the drawings of Mr. Lambert I find a bird greatly corresponding with the above . . ." Presumably the Lambert plate mentioned carries the name *Fringilla leucocephala* but Mathews himself has already agreed that the General Davies material must be regarded as its type (*Aust. Av. Rec.*, vol. iv, p. 114). There are other instances where Latham compared *inter se* the several sets of drawings and other material in working out his descriptions and now one and now another source is definitely indicated as the 'type.' In the case of *Turdus volitans* no authority is cited, but at the end of the series of his *Turdus* forms, in the account of the Punctuated Thrush (p. 188), Latham wrote: "For the description of several of the above, I am indebted to my friend Mr. Lambert, and for many to real specimens from time to time

brought into this kingdom, now in possession of Mr. Wilson, and others of my friends . . ." From which of these several sources *Turdus volitans* was described is the question. The only drawing extant with the name *volitans* written on it is admittedly the Lambert drawing of the Black-and-white Fantail, but unfortunately it does not agree with the text in an important particular. Further, the field note which is incorporated in the account, and which applies to the Scissors Grinder absolutely, indicates that other material was utilized by Latham in his description. Mr. Mathews cannot brush away this difficult field-note by saying that Latham did not write it. He *used* it, and must have had satisfactory reasons for applying it to this particular bird. We do not know anything about its source but as other field notes of those times accompanied drawings or 'real specimens' there remains the possibility, which cannot be discounted, that the actual type of *Turdus volitans* must be numbered among them and is yet undetected. I have already stressed the impropriety of indulging in name-changing in the face of the uncertainties which exist. Mr. Mathews' action is rendered all the more rash in the light of Major Whittell's interesting revelations that for an unaccountably long period Mathews continued to regard the Watling drawings as Latham's types—even after he had become aware that it was the Lambert set which Latham used. Cf. *Austral Avian Record*, vol. III, p. 140 ("I give herewith an exact reproduction of the Watling drawing, the basis of the name"), and vol. V, p. 22, wherein are given coloured reproductions of Watling drawings which are ambiguously discussed as Latham's types (as an example see p. 27: "The Watling drawing was recognized as portraying the Oriole by Gray, Gould and Sharpe . . ."). In view of his earlier and later pronouncements the following passage in the *Ibis*, 1931, p. 471, makes confusion worse confounded for the unhappy student attempting to fathom Mathews' views: "Nevertheless Latham introduced nearly two hundred new names, mostly for Australian birds. Many of these were based on the famous 'Watling' drawings, now in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, which so become the types. A duplicate set, called the 'Lambert' drawings, is in the possession of the Earl of Derby." These and other points that have been raised clearly demand that the whole matter covered by the drawings be carefully gone through afresh.

Since this discussion began Mr. Tom Iredale has closely re-examined Latham's works and has pointed out to me that in the *Supplementum Indicis Ornithologicus* where the species *Turdus volitans* was formally characterized, the abbreviated latin diagnosis does not include the remarks concerning wing and tail proportions which are given in the English account in the *Second Supplement*. It would, I

think, be sheer casuistry to argue, in view of the whole circumstances, that thereby the difficulties regarding the acceptance of the name *volitans* for the Black-and-white Fantail are automatically eliminated. To do so would be tantamount to reducing nomenclature to the status of a parlour game.

I note with interest that Mr. Mathews is disinclined to follow further the hare he started, that Gray had identified the name *volitans* with the Black-and-white Fantail.

Yours, etc.,

Sydney,
July 16, 1942.

D. L. SERVENTY.

Reviews

New Zealand Ornithology.—Interesting notes appear in the *Bulletin of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand*, 1942, no. II, amongst which is "Notes on Cuckoos," by B. J. Marples. A Pallid Cuckoo is recorded (in September, 1941), from near Beaumont, apparently the first specimen. There are two other sight records. In the same class is a Channel-bill, there being a specimen in the Otago Museum, though the locality is not published. (Incidentally, the reference to a Hudsonian Curlew, in the July review item, should have read 'Hudsonian Godwit').

Other contributions are on *Larus bulleri* and on waders in the Firth of Thames (R. B. Sibson), birds of Stewart Island (E. Stead), white herons (R. A. Falla), and birds of the Taupo district (K. A. Wodzicki), whilst there is a 'boost' for the *Emu* and the Union.—C.E.B.

South Australian Ornithology.—In the *South Australian Ornithologist*, vol. XVI, pt. 2, May, 1942, are lists of birds of Port MacDonnell (H. T. Condon), mid-Yorke Peninsula (T. G. Souter), Kangaroo Island (Joan Cleland) and south-western Australia (L. S. Francis).

J. Neil McGilp contributes "Notes on Pelicans and Musk Ducks." He records the side-splashing of water by the male and the sound associated therewith as new to him, which indicates how the most assiduous of observers sometimes miss the almost commonplace, and stresses the importance of detailed records.

E. F. Boehm deals with "Dwarfism in the Australian Raven." Some measurements are given showing that, in the field, small birds might easily be confused, by the novice, with the Little Crow.—C.E.B.

The Oil Menace.—Dillon Ripley, in "Oil on the Sea" (*Audubon Mag.*, vol. XLIV, no. 2, March-April, 1942, p. 86, describes affected ducks and the effects of salt water in coagulating the oil and the destruction of the waterproofing quality with consequent ills and starvation. Once oiled most birds are doomed and there is no treatment, although transportation to fresh-water and proper feeding might save a small percentage. Steps to tackle the problem at its source have been nullified by the war, ships have gone down, oil has spread over the sea, and "wherever sea birds concentrate on their winter feeding grounds, the toll has been enormous."—C.E.B.

Birds of Laysan.—Younger ornithologists who do not know of the ruthless destruction of bird-life, by the Japanese, at Laysan and neighbouring islands, about 30 years ago, will not be persuaded to respect the 'yellow Aryans' after reading Alfred M. Bailey's account in "The Portulaca Flats of Laysan," *Audubon Mag.*, vol. XLIV, no. 3, May-June, 1942, p. 150. In addition to the well-known revolting practices of chopping off the wings of thousands of brooding alba-