

as to become acquainted with birds and animals they were likely to meet in the land of their adoption.

The writer cannot see that this new information alters the previous conclusion. All that it does is to carry the printed use of the vernacular 'Rosella' back five years. 'Rosetta' has still at least two years' priority in print.

The Grey Plover

By A. R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W.

On August 19, 1944, and again the following day, I observed a single Grey Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*), which was presumably the same bird on each occasion, on the tidal-flats at the Cook's River estuary, Botany Bay, New South Wales. As I was able to secure a good plumage description with the aid of a telescope, publication of the details may be of interest. On the first occasion bad light, drizzling rain and strong wind made observation difficult, and I was not sure of identification, but on the following day conditions were ideal, except for a certain degree of restlessness shown by the bird. Notes compiled at the time read as follows: "General outline, size, stance, actions and feeding habits, closely similar to those of the Golden Plover; over-all upper plumage, mid-grey with darker grey markings on the crown and down the middle of the back, and a very noticeable whitish (or much lighter shade of grey) shoulder-patch which showed up more conspicuously from a distance; tips of primaries, brownish, and when resting these appear to cover the tail; underparts, white; indistinct whitish eyebrow; bill, black, heavy (stout and fairly short in comparison) and, in consequence, rather prominent; legs and feet, greyish-black; entire rump and tail shows white in flight, but the tail-tip appears to have a light grey wash; when it rises in flight and immediately before alighting the tail is spread wide and fan-shaped, each feather being discernible and showing a gap between them; underwing, white with black axillary feathers which are very striking in flight and somewhat resemble a hole through the bird's body." Continued observation of the bird was possible and it was watched through the telescope in flight on three occasions.

The only noticeable part of this plumage description, which apparently has not been detailed previously, is the whitish shoulder-patch. Concerning it, Dr. D. L. Serventy has stated (*in litt.*, Sep. 26, 1944)—"I have not noticed the light-coloured shoulder-patch . . . you may have got on to an individual variant." However, it was clearly noticeable and was the most conspicuous plumage item noted when endeavouring to obtain a clue to its identity despite the trying conditions on the first day. In view of the early date, the bird had probably just acquired its eclipse or

winter plumage and the light shoulder-patch may represent portion of the transitory plumage only and disappear as the bird attains its full eclipse attire. On the other hand, it may represent a plumage phase of an immature bird.

The black axillaries, seen only in flight, are diagnostic. This characteristic is remarked upon by Serventy in his helpful 'Guide to the Field Identification of the Waders' (*Emu*, vol. 38, pp. 65-76). The species is correctly placed, in the field-identification 'key' of that article, amongst the birds with a white rump, but in the case of the bird seen at Botany Bay the rump and tail both appeared white. The 'brown transverse barrings on the upper tail coverts' which is apparent in museum specimens is evidently not noticeable in the field.

The white tail was puzzling to me for a time, for I had not found any mention of it in literature read previously.* However, this characteristic is included in some excellent distinguishing factors for field-study, written by Professor W. Rowan in *British Birds*, vol. XX, pp. 37-38, which is mentioned in a subsequent article on the waders by D. L. Serventy (*Emu*, vol. 39, p. 46). Some doubts may still persist between distinguishing the Grey Plover and the Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*) in the field in eclipse plumage, but Professor Rowan has given a number of identification points which should dispel any doubts, for, as he states, "few waders are so contrastly marked, so completely fool-proof. Anyone who can tell black from white can distinguish them."

There appears to be no previous record of a definite nature of the Grey Plover for the Sydney district. A. J. North included it in 'A List of the Birds in the County of Cumberland, New South Wales,' published in the *Proc. Linn. Soc., N.S.W.*, vol. III, ser. 2, pt. 4, March 22, 1889, p. 1778, under its then recognized scientific title, *Squatarola helveticus*, giving the bare name only with no details of the reason for its inclusion. However, in a subsequent article ('The Birds of the County of Cumberland,' *Handbook Austr. Assn. Adv. Sci.*, 1898), its name was omitted.

Occurrences of the species within this State are very infrequent, judging by published reports. In the Australian Museum, Sydney, there is one specimen, no. 0.18408, ♀, collected near Dubbo (approximately 280 miles west of Sydney) in February, 1880. There is no mention of the species for New South Wales in later volumes of *The Emu*, although recent occurrences are recorded for both Victoria and south-western Australia.

*A subsequent check of published records has revealed that Eric Sedgewick (*The Emu*, vol. 40, p. 149) has made mention of the rump and tail appearing 'almost white' in connection with observations in the Rockingham District, W.A.