

Reviews

Taxonomic Notes.—In order to avoid the inclusion of taxonomic discussions in the proposed popular handbook of Philippine birds, Jean Delacour and Ernst Mayr have published some criticisms and findings in 'Notes on the Taxonomy of the Birds of the Philippines,' *Zoologica*, vol. 30, pt. 3, Nov. 15, 1945, pp. 105-117. The comments, based on examination of extensive material, are joint in acceptance but independent in preparation.

This note is confined to matters of Australian interest. Several genera, some long-standing, are rejected. Included in these are *Demigretta*, *Excalfactoria*, *Synoicus*, *Squatarola* and *Crocethia* (genera "based on the loss of a morphological character are rarely valid"). There is, perhaps, an adumbration of intention to adopt Hartert's lumping of the stint/sandpiper groups into *Calidris*. If these and the knots are separated, then *Ereunetes* has priority over *Erolia* and the Curlew-Sandpiper is *Ereunetes ferrugineus*. (see Stresemann, *Ornith. Monatsber.*, 1941). *Leucotreron* is a synonym of *Ptilinopus*; *Oreocincla* of *Zoothera*.—C.E.B.

A New Zealand List.—The Supplement to vol. I of *N.Z. Bird Notes* is devoted to a 'List of the Birds of New Zealand,' by B. J. Marples. It is stated to have been compiled for convenience and not as a contribution to any controversy on classification. As it takes into consideration, however, the most recent information available, it is a list likely to be of extreme use, especially as it extends to the circumjacent islands and sets out in terse symbols the range and breeding localities.

Many changes that we in Australia have not yet authorized are adopted, e.g. the specific names of *aethiopicus* for the White Ibis, and *madagascariensis* for the Curlew, and, generically, *Cygnus* for the Black Swan. A number of Australian stragglers are included, such as the Wood-Duck, Black-tailed Native-hen, Australian Pratincole, Channel-bill and Dollar-bird. Should not *Erolia ruficollis* be included as a visitor? The scientific names of the introduced Goldfinch and Redpoll have inadvertently been transposed. The Pied (or White-headed) and the Black Stilts are lumped as one species, evidently following Peters.—C.E.B.

Vanishing New Zealand Birds.—Australia is not alone in possessing birds that are on the 'disappearing' list; New Zealand, with its smaller area, smaller list of species, and (comparatively, at least) larger tally of introduced predators and competitors, is suffering sadly. Mr. L. E. Richdale, in an illustrated pamphlet of 24 pages, directs attention to the dwindling bird life of one small island off Stewart Island, at the south of the Dominion group. He classes seven birds here as disappearing — Robin (*Miro australis*), Southern Saddleback (*Creadion carunculatus*), Bush Wren (*Xenicus longipes*), Bush Snipe (*Coenocorypha aucklandica*), Morepork (*Ninox novae-seelandiae*), Mutton-bird (*Puffinus griseus*), and Korure (*Pterodroma inexpectata*). Distributed into the proper hands, this little book should perform a service quite out of proportion to its size in bringing home to New Zealanders the heritage that they are allowing to slip through their fingers. Three points in its production demand criticism, however. If ornithologists describe themselves, in print, as "a few poor, misguided, cranky folk"—a phrase quoted from the foreword of the booklet—who can blame the general public for taking up the cry? Surely we, as followers of a dignified and enlightened scientific pursuit, do not have to descend to such means to attract public attention! The other two points are slight—to saddle a 24-page pamphlet with a preface, then a foreword, and then an introduction before getting down to business does seem to overload it a little; and the serial numbering

of the pages through six separate and unrelated works is likely to annoy the reader without having any compensating virtue. Price of the book is 2/6, from the author, 23 Skibo Street, Kew, Dunedin.

Series B of *Camera Studies of New Zealand Birds*, by the same author (3/6 net) contains 24 first-rate photographs of penguins on the Otago Peninsula.—P.C.M.

Correspondence

BREEDING OF WHITE-FRONTED TERN.

To the Editor,
Sir—

As it may be some time before a third edition of my field guide (*Tasmanian Birds*, 1945) is printed, I would be pleased if you will allow me now to correct a statement contained in the book in reference to the eggs of the White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*). The reference, on page 30 of the second edition, is—

"There are three eggs in the Tasmanian Museum marked as having been taken on the Friars, South Bruny, in November, 1885. This is the only known breeding record for Tasmania."

The supposed record was based on an entry contained in the catalogue of A. E. Brent, in possession of the Tasmanian Museum, and supported by three eggs from the Brent collection in the Museum. These egg are listed by Brent as those of *S. striata*, but pencilled on the shell of each egg is 'W-Tern'. Brent records these were taken on The Friars by A. L. Butler in 1885.

In view of the determination by K. A. Hindwood (*Emu*, vol. 45, 1946, pp. 179-200) that there is no authenticated record of the White-fronted Tern's eggs being taken in Australia, the eggs were forwarded to the Australian Museum, Sydney, for comparison with similar material. Mr. Hindwood, who examined them, now informs me that they are the eggs of the Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*). He believes, and I concur, that the name given in pencil — 'W-Tern' — refers not to White-fronted Tern but to 'Wideawake' Tern, an alternative vernacular for *S. fuscata*.

As Brent was astray in his identification of the eggs — there is no similar material here for comparison — I think it highly unlikely that the eggs came from The Friars at all.

Yours, etc.,

MICHAEL SHARLAND.

Hobart, Tas., 28/5/46.

The date of publication was July 29, 1946.