

57, middle toe with claw 51.5 mm. Primary 1 exceeding longest secondary, 17 mm. Primary 4 exceeding primary 7, 85 mm."

"Comparison: The considerable wing-length and pointed wing rule out *C. bennetti*. *Ceciliae* has a longer and stronger bill, blunter wing, and (already after the post-juvenile moult) snow-white feather-bases everywhere. In the coloration of the feather-bases *difficilis* approaches most nearly certain specimens of *coronoides* (almost gradation from whitish base towards black tip), but *coronoides* has a very much longer and stronger bill," [ibid. p. 125].

It is to be noted that *difficilis* is based on a single specimen, which may be either a mutant or a hybrid, and its status must remain in doubt for the present. The bird is possibly an aberrant Australian Raven.

Stresemann makes a number of important observations on the comparative morphology of the crows of the Indo-Australian region, and includes in the paper a table giving dimensions of specimens examined by him. The paper is a notable contribution to our knowledge of the *Corvus* species concerned.—E.F.B.

Fairy Wrens.—Such 'conversation pieces' as A. H. Chisholm's 'Fairy Wrens', placed between elementary bird accounts and learned expositions, must serve a distinctly useful purpose in nature education. Take an attractive group and present a miscellany of its characteristics, spiced with touches of its origins and history—that is the recipe. The wrens of the genera *Maturus* and *Rosina* have few peers for such a presentation.

The plate of wrens accompanying N. W. Cayley's *What Bird is That?* and half-tone photos. are included, so readers may confirm the author's account of their beauty.

We do not know whether retention of the so-called White-backed Wren is purposeful or accidental, but, quite apart from the fact that most ornithologists regarded that bird as a 'sport', the Checklist committee officially combined it with the White-winged Wren (*Maturus leucnotus*—*olim cyanotus*) in October 1947.—C.E.B.

News and Notes

A meeting of the Union was held at the lecture hall of the National Museum, Melbourne, on July 2. About 40 members and friends heard a talk by Mr. E. S. Hanks on cuckoos and the origin of the parasitic habit in birds—an interesting discourse with a world-wide range, and introducing particularly observations on the cowbirds of America by Dr. Freidman and on the English Cuckoo by Edgar Chance.

The remainder of the evening was taken up by an informal discussion on the subject. Reference was made to records of the Black-eared Cuckoo in the vicinity of Melbourne—at Bayswater, Little River and Toolern Vale. Consideration of how many records are there of Australian cuckoos actually seen laying brought discussion of a number of instances, including a record by Mr. A. D. Selby who had seen a cuckoo lay its egg on the ground and then carry it to a nest.

Mr. P. Crosbie Morrison drew attention to how little was known about the Australian cuckoos and particularly the matter of where they went after leaving southern

Australia. It was suggested that members of the Union throughout Australia be asked specially to observe and forward notes on this question, and to record any other facts that would assist in building up a life history of these birds. We ask—'Will you please make a particular effort in this direction.'

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