

observation of five birds at Boat Harbour on October 3, 1953, is of interest. The reef and adjacent beach at Boat Harbour, a few miles south of Sydney, is one of the best-known local wader habitats, and a list of species recorded there was recently summarized by K. A. Hindwood (*Emu*, vol. 48, pp. 323-324).

The small flock of White-headed Stilts seen there on October 3 gave me a pleasant surprise. They were first located standing on the northern edge of the reef where the incoming waves broke over their long legs and frequently caused them to move quickly backwards. While I remained there they appeared timid and restless, and on a few occasions flew off ocean-wards, probably being disturbed by my close presence, or driven away by the numerous Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*). The Gulls proved pugnacious towards them, evidently sensing a stranger. However, on every occasion they flew away they presented a fine sight, flying low over the ocean surge and calling frequently. They appeared loath to go far and always returned soon to the reef-edge. When I eventually departed they were still there. I did not see them attempt to gather food at any time.

During the months previous to, and following, the Boat Harbour occurrence, small numbers of White-headed Stilts were seen about the Hawkesbury swamps, where they occasionally nest, about 30 miles west of Sydney. However, during that time those at Boat Harbour were the only ones recorded closer to the city. In fact, that small flock, and an observation of a single bird on a mud flat near Cook's River by Jeff Clyde on January 21, 1946, appear to be the only occurrences of the White-headed Stilt within the Sydney metropolitan area since 1895.—A. R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W., 18/7/54.

The death has occurred of Mr. A. G. Campbell. An obituary will be published in the next issue.

Reviews

Australian Hawks.—Taxonomic reviews of Australian bird groups have often been based on material in overseas museums and conducted by overseas workers. In 'Taxonomic Notes on Australian Hawks', by H. T. Condon and Dean Amadon, *Records Sth. Aust. Mus.*, vol. XI, no. 2, May 28, 1954, pp. 189-246, we have a comprehensive presentation of observations, based on overseas and local skins, by an American and an Australian ornithologist each of distinction. Despite the sources of material, including the Mathews collection in New York, the lack of specimens from Western Australia, southern Queensland and Tasmania is deplored.

The authors assert that because of its long isolation Australia has served as an important area for differentiation. It was probably the focal point of evolution of some groups.

All our diurnal raptors are dealt with other than *Falco berigora*, *Circus approximans* and *Pandion haliaetus*, which have been otherwise

recently reviewed. Three new forms are described—of the Crested Hawk, Brahminy Kite and Wedge-tailed Eagle. It is pleasing to note that this last—*Aquila audax fleayi*—honours a zoologist well deserving of credit for his faunal studies.

Reference is made to the close similarity of the four species (two extra-limital) of *Elanus*, which could be united, by some workers, into a single species. *Baza* is displaced by *Aviceda*; and *Uroaëtus* is merged into *Aquila*. The vernacular 'Whistling Kite' is advocated for *Haliastur sphenurus*. *Butastur teesa* (based on a single doubtful record from New South Wales) is placed in the 'suspense' list.

The paper reflects patient and painstaking examinations and measurements, and includes many pertinent observations.—C.E.B.

Bower-birds and Cat-birds.—Display, breeding and classification of the family Ptilonorhynchidae, which is confined to Australia, New Guinea and nearby islands, are the subjects of a review paper by Dr. A. J. Marshall (Dept. of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, St. Bart's Medical College, University of London), published in *Biological Reviews*, vol. 29, 1954, pp. 1-45 (Cambridge Philosophical Society). Marshall rejects the extended classifications of Mathews (1926) and Iredale (1950), stating that their views on relationships and bower building "cannot be sustained if we consider bower-birds as living animals outside the museum cabinet". He divides the bower-birds and cat-birds into two families. In the absence of any acceptable morphological arrangement, he bases his classification on "a consideration of bower architecture and other behavioural attributes". His Ptilonorhynchidae comprises two distinct groups of 'true bower-birds', sub-family Amblyornithinae (maypole-builders) with *Priondura* and *Amblyornis*, and sub-family Ptilonorhynchinae (avenue-builders) with *Sericulus*, *Ptilonorhynchus*, *Chlamydera*; and, also *Archboldia papuensis*, somewhat tentatively in the family Ptilonorhynchidae because the only and meagre information available since the species was discovered in 1938 points to that association. His family Ailoroedidae comprises *Ailuroedus*, arboreal cat-birds; and *Scenopœetes dentirostris*, the Tooth-billed 'Bower-bird', an 'offshoot' cat-bird of the forest floor.

Marshall introduces his review with emphatic strictures of "a voluminous popular literature . . . about the family, much of which is nonsense. Most of it has been marred by anthropomorphic generalization, and all of it is unsupported by experimental evidence. . . . Apart from purely descriptive matter, little that has been written about the behaviour of wild bower-birds will stand up to critical enquiry." Here it must be stated that Marshall apparently exhausted the literature—there are 92 items in his list of references. Marshall's case is lucid in text and illustration, the latter concerned mainly with bower design and orientation, and approximate distribution of the species. His description of display and breeding behaviour is related throughout to biological reasoning and at times to proving experiment, such as bower behaviour of castrated males; but most of his reasoning concerning bower-birds is developed from behaviour of the Satin Bower-bird and, to much lesser extent, the Spotted Bower-bird, because of very scrappy information available about the other species of bower-birds. This emphasizes that suitably placed observers in Australia have an almost untouched study in detail of behaviour in the wild and in aviary of the Regent, Fawn-breasted, Great and Golden Bower-birds; the Golden is the only Australian 'maypole-builder'. Undoubtedly Marshall has provided a required fresh basis for study of bower-birds and cat-birds, and has in the press at 1954 a work to be called 'Bower-birds: Their Displays and Breeding Cycles.'—J.J.

The date of publication was August 9, 1954.