

The illustration of the head of the Grey-faced Petrel reproduced in this paper was drawn from specimen no. 0-39630 by E. S. Hoskin to whom thanks are accorded; also to Messrs. Gibson and Sefton of Thirroul for details of specimens in their collection.

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Stray Feathers

Little Egret in Tasmania.—On May 15, 1957, my wife and I noticed an egret feeding with White-faced Herons (*Notoptyx novæ-hollandiæ*) at Blackman's Bay on the south-east coast of Tasmania. The bird proved extremely shy and difficult to approach and it was not until some two hours later that we obtained a good view of it at Dunally, some two miles from where the hunt had started. The egret was rather smaller than the White-faced Herons with which it was feeding and its legs and bill were completely black. It was similar to the egrets I had seen in Egypt and South Africa. From these points we identified it as a Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*).

I believe that this is the first record of the Little Egret in Tasmania and it is interesting to note that it was in the south-east at the same time as the first Royal Spoonbills were present.—PETER F. BOLGER, Blackman's Bay, Tas., 26/5/57.

Unusual Nesting of the Welcome Swallow.—Although the habit of the Welcome Swallow of building nests in such mobile sites as punts, dredges, etc., is well known, the following notes may be of interest.

On September 30, 1956, a nest was noticed on the vehicle ferry where the Pacific Highway crosses the Richmond River, N.S.W. The nest was built on an old sack which was lying on a shelf inside the engine-house of the ferry. The nest was still being built, the birds picking up the mud from the tidal mud flats near the river-bank. The birds were first sighted as the ferry was about to leave the south bank of the river, and, as the ferry left the shore, the birds continued to fly back to the south bank for mud. However, as soon as the ferry reached mid-stream the birds, on flying off for more mud, flew to the north bank. Apparently this process was repeated on the reverse trip. Intelligent birds!—H. L. BELL, Oxford Park, Qld., 16/5/57.

Pelicans Perching in Trees.—A flock of about 100 Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) was recently seen resting in a flooded paddock at Tocumwal, New South Wales. On my approach they took flight and, after wheeling in their usual impressive style, the majority settled again on the water. Ten or more, however, pitched on to the branches of a tall ring-barked red gum, where they settled in an apparently comfortable and familiar manner. I have insufficient experience of this species to know if perching in trees is customary, but I do know that the sight of these huge birds with their enormous bills amid the gaunt limbs of the dead tree was most incongruous and appeared almost 'prehistoric'.—JOHN N. HOBBS, Finley, N.S.W., 17 11/55.

Victorian Grey-headed Albatross.—On December 30, 1955, members of the Bird Observers Club found a freshly beach-washed specimen of the Grey-headed Albatross (*Diomedea chrysostoma*) at Nelson, Victoria. It was brought to the National Museum, Melbourne, where the registered number of the specimen is B.6240. From previous records in *The Emu* (November 1952, p. 274; December 1953, p. 304; June 1954, p. 118; and May 1955, p. 103) this appears to be the sixth Victorian record for this species.—HELEN I. ASTON, Hawthorn, Victoria, 15.1/56.

Pipit Sings from Tree-tops.—In their *Handbook of the Birds of Western Australia*, 2nd edn., p. 303, 1951, D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell state that the Pipit (*Anthus australis*) never indulges in the habit of perching in trees and on stumps like the Song-Larks (*Cinclorhynchus*) do. That is quite unlike my own experience with the Pipit.

I have often seen the birds sitting on fence-posts, stumps, and on the dry branches of trees, and it is not at all an infrequent occurrence on the Mount Mary Plains, S.A., for a Pipit to be heard singing while it is sitting on a dead branch of a tree-top.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 15.8.1956.

The Starling in Sunraysia.—In the article in *The Emu*, 'Starlings in the Sunraysia District of Victoria', by H. F. Thomas, I note that some doubt is expressed as to when the birds first arrived in that district. In *The Useful Birds of Southern Australia*, by Robert Hall, published in 1907, when writing of the Starling the author says—"During September of this year I observed two couples in the country between the Murray and Wakool Rivers. For many years their descendants will be an unmixed blessing in that country. Mildura, to the west, beware!"

I do not know whether Mr. Thomas overlooked the above reference, but if so it may be of interest to him, for evidently these birds were only making their way to that district in 1907.

It must have been September 1906 when Mr. Hall made

the above observation, as the Preface to his book is dated January 1907. — RUTH SCHLEICHER, Hazelbrook, N.S.W., 29/4/57.

Feeding Habits of Some Water Birds.—Recently, whilst watching some Little Egrets (*Egretta garzetta*) feeding by the Lachlan River near Oxley, New South Wales, I noticed that each bird was consistently holding a foot forward, stirring the muddy bottom of the river and catching any water life thus disturbed. It was noticeable that none of the numerous White Egrets (*Egretta alba*) present were acting similarly, but all depended on slow stalking through the water. S. R. White has already drawn attention to this habit of the Little Egret (*Emu*, vol. 46, p. 102). Many waders at times adopt this method of feeding. I have also recorded the White-faced Heron (*Notophoja novaehollandiae*) doing likewise. At Balranald, on January 15, 1957, a White-faced Heron feeding in a small pool left by the receding Murrumbidgee River was catching 'yabbies' (*Cherax* sp.) disturbed from the mud by its pattering foot.

At the same pool, a Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) was methodically destroying a Murray crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*) by bashing it against a large tree-root. This giant 'yabbie' abounded throughout the Murray River system in 1957 following the devastating floods. It grows to over a foot in total length, is heavily armoured, and possesses formidable pincers which it does not hesitate to use as I know to my own regret. Nevertheless, the larger water birds were not deterred by the crayfish's defences and this crustacean formed a considerable part of the diet of the White-faced and Pacific Herons, the Straw-necked and White Ibis, and the two Spoonbills as well as the Night Herons. All species adopted the same procedure with their catch, repeated bashing against some hard object, such treatment often lasting more than half an hour. From my own experience I know their persistence was well rewarded as the crayfish is delectable eating.—JOHN N. HOBBS, Finley, N.S.W., 4/5/57.

Rosellas eating Scale Insects.—During the past three weeks, a pair of Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*) have visited, regularly each morning, an ironbark tree on my property. The birds always arrive just on sunrise, and spend a busy half-hour foraging amongst the leaves, biting a lot off in the process, and sparing no effort in their search for some unseen delicacy. Closer examination revealed that they were eating a sugary scale which infested the leaves of the tree. This scale was identified as that of a psyllid or lerp insect of an unknown species. The insect was present in all stages, and as far as I could tell the birds enjoyed all equally, although I assume the main attraction was the wax which was quite sweet to the taste.—D. S. STRINGFELLOW, Baulkham Hills, N.S.W., 14/6/57.