

## News and Notes

### INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTION

Reference is made to the note on R.A.O.U. Headquarters on page 225 of the current volume.

After considerable enquiry the Council was unable to obtain suitable alternative premises at a rental within the Union's means. The Council has therefore decided to remain at 386 Flinders Lane and to increase the annual membership subscription, pursuant to power in that behalf in the Articles of Association, to £2—as from January 1, 1960.

Considering that the original membership fee, nearly 60 years ago, was 15/-, and bearing in mind the general overall increase in the price of commodities and services, the new subscription amount is relatively small and should not react against continued membership.

Members are urged to continue association—in fact, to use their best endeavours to increase membership.

Donations towards the cost of producing *The Emu*, or to Union funds generally, will be gratefully accepted.

### FOR SALE

A set of *The Emu* complete from vol. 4 to 58, of which vols. 5 to 10 are bound (in three) and vols. 14 and 21 are bound separately. All other vols. are in parts and are in good condition. Included in the set are the "*Species Index*" and the two editions of the *Checklist*. Best offer. D. R. McPhee, 20 Barana Parade, Roseville, N.S.W.

### PROPOSED NEW GUINEA CAMP-OUT

To date there is insufficient indication of intention to attend to justify the Council's deciding to authorize the holding of the 1960 Camp-out in New Guinea. See *Emu*, vol. 59, p. 224. The matter will be held in abeyance until the Council meeting on January 19, 1960. The project will be considered at such meeting and accepted or rejected according to response. Members proposing to attend are requested to notify the Hon. General Secretary by January 15.

## Reviews

**Ibis and Grasshoppers.**—Some fifty years ago, W. H. D. Le Souëf (1901) reported Straw-necked Ibis consuming large quantities of young grasshoppers near Deniliquin, in the Riverina, N.S.W. He estimated that the birds destroyed an almost astronomical number of the insects. Those observations and conclusions were subsequently given very wide publicity in Australia in the interests of bird protection.

Dr. R. Carrick has investigated the problem in an objective scientific manner in the Macquarie Marshes during recent years. In a paper on 'The Food and Feeding Habits of the Straw-necked Ibis, *Threskiornis spinicollis* (Jameson), and the White Ibis, *T. molucca* (Cuvier), in

Australia', *C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research*, 4 (1), 69-92, 1959, he expresses the opinion that predation pressure by ibises on early swarms of locusts fell far short of effective control. Carrick states that while great numbers of the insects are eaten during an extensive plague, it does not follow that these birds are important factors in the control of locust plagues.—E.F.B.

**Pseudotuberculosis in Magpies.**—R. Mykytowycz and D. W. Davies, writing on '*Pasteurella Pseudotuberculosis* in the Australian Black-backed Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen* (Latham)', *C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research*, 4 (1), 61-68, 1959, describe the characteristics of an outbreak of pseudotuberculosis in Black-backed Magpies in the Australian Capital Territory, and discuss its possible relations to pyaemic hepatitis of sheep.—E.F.B.

**Breeding Biology of Mallee Fowl.**—Since 1955, H. J. Frith has published several papers on the breeding biology of the Mallee Fowl. The results of studies during six breeding seasons near Griffith, N.S.W., are contained in a paper on 'Breeding of the Mallee Fowl, *Leipoa ocellata* Gould, (Megapodiidae)', *C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research*, 4 (1), 31-60, 1959. Frith found that the beginning and end of the breeding season are determined by the availability of natural heat for incubation. Clutch-size is ultimately determined by the food supply of the female, and it seems probable that egg-size may be similarly affected.—E.F.B.

**Pink-eared Duck.**—In a paper on 'The Nesting of the Pink-eared Duck', *The Wild Fowl Trust Ninth Annual Report*, 118-127, 1958, John Warham gives an account of observations on the nidification and behaviour of the peculiar and attractive Pink-eared Duck (*Mala-corhynchus membranaceus*) at Moora, Western Australia. A number of instructive illustrations showing various activities of the species is included. There are useful notes on calls and displays, and Warham records the interesting fact that the young are induced to descend from the nest by the calls of both parents circling in the water below the nest site.—E.F.B.

**The 'Least' Terns in Australian Waters.**—W. B. Hitchcock's survey, originally undertaken to clarify minor distributional queries, relative to the Little and Fairy Terns, but extended to include a wider field, published in *The South Australian Ornithologist*, vol. 22 (as parts 7 and 8 combined), April, 1959, is well presented and important. In Australia the two species, between them, range the entire coast—*albifrons* from about Broome easterly, southerly, and 'around the corner' into Bass Strait and nearly to Melbourne (breeding as far as Lakes Entrance), and *nereis* around the remainder—southerly from about the Dampier Archipelago and easterly to Melbourne and beyond (breeding as far as Port Albert) and Tasmania. An 'overlap' constituted by the Melbourne-area birds (Corio Bay, skin in National Museum) is suggested by Hitchcock as possibly arising from 'wrong-way' migrants of *albifrons*—strays that migrated westwards instead of northerly from, presumably, an eastern Victorian breeding ground. Incidentally, Howe's *albifrons* eggs record from Mud Island is discounted. There has been considerable misidentity in the past—this paper refers to a number of instances: its pointers should prevent continuance of mistakes. The record map is illuminating.

Plumage and moulting descriptions are given—young, juvenal, first-winter, first-summer, adult-winter, adult-summer—and characters for identity (during nuptial plumage phase). Taxonomy, eggs, environment and food, breeding seasons, and geographical distribution are sectional titles. Records from skins and literature of each species, Australian and ex-Australian, are comprehensive.

The apparent close similarity assumed from field observations is confirmed—both species are largely piscivorous, preying on the same

range-size of fish, nesting sites are identical, they forage over similar habitats, and habitat preferences are "neritic rather than pelagic, and estuarine rather than fluviatile". The two forms appear to exemplify well the principle underlying establishment of new species postulated by Mayr and by Lack: Hitchcock says that existing knowledge is not adequate enough to establish whether the two related but differentiating forms, have withdrawn after meeting, to occupy separate but contiguous geographical areas, or whether there is still active encroachment of one on the range of the other. Hitchcock's summary refers to the two as morphologically similar allopatric species, distinguishable with certainty, in the field, only in nuptial plumage. *S. nereis* is relatively sedentary, but *albifrons* is highly migratory (and practically cosmopolitan).—C.E.B.

**Learning Birds.**—When there were no text books reasonably priced, and few folk with whom to discuss problems, the bird student usually made sure, if slow, progress, and was rarely complacent about his findings. It is difficult to gauge with accuracy the relative values of such a means of gaining knowledge and that 'laid on' as it were, and presented in composite and comprehensive booklets. Comparisons aside, such accounts certainly attract the newcomer, develop the interest of those mildly concerned, and, even to the 'expert', often provide a ready reference on some point not always readily to hand elsewhere.

J. D. Macdonald's *Instructions to Young Ornithologists*, London, Museum Press Limited, pp. 128, price 12/6, deals with bird biology and is a 'conversational' account which avoids the aspect of a small book on a large subject becoming a mere catalogue of facts. The author expounds the chief phases of bird study, and expands, from personal experience, where he feels a particular item warrants it. Thus the subject of adaptations for flight provides considerable detail on feathers, weight reduction, size, construction, egg-laying, skeleton, oxygen supply, heart, cooling; and the chapter on feathers is equally detailed—all very readable. Naturally, with specific birds, references are usually to European forms, but most of the matters included are 'general'.—C.E.B.

**Tasmanian Birds.**—There are many ways of making a book. R. H. Green's *A Catalogue of Tasmanian Birds* is a compilation. Tasmanian species are culled from *The Checklist* with its numbering, and introduced species are added. Ruled 'blank' sheets are interleaved for notes.

The author considers that the use of status words such as 'common', 'rare', etc., is rarely sufficiently relative. He has accordingly introduced a numerical classification with extended terms and amplifying descriptions. There is also a Territorial Distribution table and a Migratory classification, each with associated glossary. The applicable data therefrom are included with each species listed. 'Extinct' is defined as 'having died out'—correctly, for an expression such as 'extinct in [say] the Sydney area', often used to indicate that a species no longer occurs in a particular part of its former range, although existing in another part, appears to be an incorrect use? Surely 'extinct' cannot be employed except of a species entirely 'defunct'!

The very conciseness of this list is meritorious. There is no cluttering up with unnecessary details, and nothing to repel the beginner.—C.E.B.

**Bird Islands of New Zealand.**—This book (by Major Robert Wilson, Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 25/-), is largely of the author's reminiscences of his trips to outlying islands of New Zealand in company with Edgar Stead and Major Buddle. Many of the islands—and there are scores—are of intense interest to naturalists as they support so many unique forms and associations of birds, which, in the case of some of the petrels, are numbered in millions.

Wilson casts himself in the role of henchman to these two naturalists, with duty of providing companionship and camping experience. That

may be, but he underrates himself for, as a naturalist of no mean ability, he is able to write convincingly and knowledgeably of the birds he has studied.

Most of the trips concern the islands around Stewart Island, such as Soloman, Codfish, Jacques Lees, and the northern islands including the Hen and Poor Knights.

The attachment of petrels to their nesting sites is well illustrated: on Green Island Dove Petrels nested but no White-faced Storm-Petrels, whereas on Ruapuke, a mile away, the situation is in reverse. Wilson suggests that the Storm-Petrels succeed on Ruapuke because of the absence of Skuas. They would fall easy prey to the Skuas which are shot in Ruapuke when they appear from Green Island, as they attack lambs. Apparently the Dove Petrels on Green Island are able to survive the predation of the Skuas (30-odd pairs) by their sheer numbers: it is estimated, on the basis of one nest per square yard, that the island contains about three million birds!

The book is well produced and is copiously illustrated with ninety-one photographs illustrating many of the islands, camps, personalities and above all, the birds. The skill of Stead, Buddle, Fleming, Falla, Richdale and Macmillan has been widely drawn on to add to Wilson's own photographs and the result is a book which all ornithologists will want on their shelves.—J.M.C.

**The World's Birds.**—Any attempt to summarize the families of birds of the world, give a brief outline of their peculiarities, enumerate the species involved and illustrate a goodly representation, deserves commendation. Such is the aim of *Living Birds of the World*, by E. Thomas Gilliard, 1958, 400 pp., Chanticleer Press, New York, and Hamish Hamilton Ltd., London.

There is ample reference of an Australian flavour, with emphasis on many birds peculiar to the Region, such as the lyrebirds, scrub-birds, bower-birds and 'piping-crows'. As the author has made frequent trips to New Guinea, one might expect (and not be disappointed with) notes on various birds of that island. There are 217 coloured illustrations and numerous black-and-white plates. Those in colour particularly impress, and mention could well be made of such photographs as Eric Hosking's Stone-Curlew (pl. 64), Eliot Porter's Short-billed Marsh-Wren (pl. 177), and Paul Schwartz's Rufous-breasted Wren (pl. 178). The name of Norman Chaffer is prominent among illustrated Australian birds.

It is a matter for regret that some species have been photographed from museum mounted skins (without drawing attention to the fact), such as the Banded Plover (pl. 51), as the background depicted is as unlike the true habitat of that plains-loving bird as could be conceived. The bird called Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*) on plate 15 is the Variegated Wren (*M. lamberti*). Anyone familiar with a particular region or certain species will detect a few inaccuracies, but in a book covering such a wide scope it would be virtually impossible to check every statement. On the whole *Living Birds of the World* provides fascinating reading and is most instructive. To those who wish to deliberate on certain families or species and to those who find pleasure in viewing the varied assortment of the World's birds, this interesting book will give undoubted pleasure.—A.R.M.

**More Australian Birds in New Zealand.**—Falla (in *Emu* 53, pp. 36-46) published a useful commentary on vagrant records of Australian birds in New Zealand. In *Notornis*, 8, nos. 1-4, several further interesting records appear. Falla (pp. 29-32) records two specimens of the Little Egret and further records of the White Ibis, Glossy Ibis and Coot. The last has now been found breeding near Arrowtown in the south of the South Island, by M. M. Small and M. F. Soper (p. 93). Two chicks were seen, and a nest of five eggs, and that confirms breeding suspected for some years. White Ibis records are also given (p. 56), by H. M. and H. R. McKenzie, A. J. Prickett and W. R. Cooper. Two

immature Nankeen Night-Herons were recorded from Blenheim by B. D. Bell (p. 52). The information given implies that they may be New Zealand bred birds. Two nests of the Welcome Swallow are recorded (p. 61) by Ross H. Michie. From one nest three young were reared. Spine-tailed Swifts have been recorded from Auckland (J. A. Buchanan, p. 25), and Cook Strait (B. D. Bell, p. 121).

Not all the vagrants recorded become established, but it can be regarded as certain that the Coot, at least, like the Spur-winged Plover before it, will eventually become part of the New Zealand scene.—J.M.C.

**Bower-birds.**—In 'A Comparative Analysis of Courtship Movements in Closely Allied Bowerbirds of the Genus *Chlamydera*', *American Mus. Nov.*, no. 1936, April 22, 1959, Dr. E. T. Gilliard compares the display of the Greater Bower-bird (*C. nuchalis*), as recorded from the Kimberley District of Western Australia (*Emu*, 57, 72-78), with that of the Fawn-breasted species (*C. cerviniventris*), studied by him in New Guinea. In the former species only the males are crested; in the latter neither sex has a crest. The display of the male *nuchalis* includes an attitude in which the head is jerked and turned so that the nuchal crest is directed towards the watching female. Similarly in *cerviniventris* the male, despite his lack of a crest, nevertheless twists his head in a most unnatural way so that the back of his head is aimed towards the female. Gilliard suggests that these head-twisting movements are vestiges of a previously-crested state in this species, and the behaviour is adduced as evidence for his 'transferral theory' which presumes to account for the inverse ratio between the development of sexual plumage and the development of bowers in some of the Ptilonorhynchidae.

Gilliard's second paper, 'The Courtship Behavior of Sanford's Bowerbird (*Archboldia sanfordi*)', *American Mus. Nov.*, no. 1936, April 22, 1959, is an important contribution to ornithology. Sanford's Bower-bird was first discovered on Mt. Hagen, New Guinea, by the author in 1950, but at that time the bird had not been seen at its bower. In the present paper the display ground and the actions of both sexes in it are described in some detail, with the aid of sketches and habitat photographs. The bower, built by the male, is a mat of ferns and vines adorned with small piles of shells, resin, charcoal and strands of gold-coloured bamboo. The male arranges the ornaments and sings with a variety of harsh ventriloquial notes. When the female comes to the bower the male flattens his body on to the fern mat, chews at a vine held in his mouth, and flutters his wings like a nestling. He 'crawls' slowly forward towards the female in this strangely subservient attitude. Coition was not observed, and the advantage of the male's display was not discovered.—J.W.

**Proceedings of the New Zealand Ecological Society.**—This society is progressing rapidly in its coverage of ecological matters. Its proceedings (no. 6, May 1959 (Report of 7th Annual Meeting, 26-30 Aug., 1958), published by N.Z. Ecol. Soc., Box 202, Wellington, 7/6), contain three bird papers—'The Northern Blue Penguin (*Eudyptula minor novaehollandiae*) in Wellington Harbour', by F. C. Kinsky; 'The Nesting Habits of the Royal Albatross on Campbell Island', by Kai Westerskov; and 'Birds of the Hutt Valley', by P. C. Bull. The information contained is of more interest to the ornithologist than to the ecologist, and an ornithologist must feel regret that original and otherwise unpublished matters of importance should appear in other than an ornithological journal, and one not widely read, at that. Kinsky has for example, given many facts hitherto unknown about the Blue Penguin under the headings 'Methods of Work', 'The Yearly Cycle Aug.-Jan. (breeding), Dec.-Mar. (moult), Mar.-July (occupation of nesting burrows and pair formation)', and 'Movement (ringing results)'. This paper is only a summary of results and presumably

Kinsky will publish fuller facts as well as his deductions in due course. In the meantime it is the intention of the reviewer only to draw attention to the paper.

The other two papers are treated much more from the ecologist's viewpoint. In some aspects Bull, for example, has drawn on already-published details, such as Thrush and Blackbird movements. The appendix, a preliminary list of the birds of the Hutt Valley, is valuable, containing, as it does, only records of the last ten years. (The reviewer can add a useful record for November 6, 1955, for the Brown Quail near Kaitoke, N.Z. Topographical Map N 161, 705473).—J.M.C.

**Victorian Bird List.**—John L. McKean's remark in *The Bird Observer*, July 1959, that the 'last' published list of Victorian birds was compiled by Dr. J. A. Leach and published in 1908 [*A Descriptive List of Birds Native to Victoria*], is only correct up to a point. Although called *An Australian Bird Book*, the early editions of Leach's book of that name (from 1911 until the introduction of the supplement) included only birds considered to occur in Victoria, so that, broadly speaking, the first section of the 1929 edition might well be considered as a list of Victorian species. Over the years the number has increased from Leach's 395 (and some un-numbered 'extras') to 413 definite, largely by the addition of penguins (at least 3 species), waders (e.g., Marsh Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek and Pectoral and Broadbilled Sandpipers) and sea-birds. McKean also gives a list of 'records requiring substantiation' and concludes with a list of 24 'doubtful and erroneous records'. His major list is on the basis of 'substantiated records only': he does not indicate the criteria.

One feels that there was scope here for more than a mere list. A paper dealing with the 'why' of the additions to date giving references to authority for inclusion, and with the 'wherefore' of the deletions, with an indication of what had been learned of the alleged justification for original inclusion and with reasons for rejection, published as an analytical study in some medium with wider circulation, would have been correspondingly useful. If 'substantiation' is in fact related to existence of specimens, reasons for rejection would be clear of course.

It is interesting to conjecture as to the basis for inclusion of a number of forms in Leach's 395 or so. Leach told this reviewer that Dorron, the publican at Mallacoota (when the township was on the eastern side of the Inlet), described to him, as a local bird, a species that, from the precise detail, could only have been a Noisy Pitta, but then derogated from his own account by stating that he had seen it perched on the house spouting; Leach did not include it. He doubtless included the Night Parrot on the strength of Campbell's statement, in his *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, that Victoria was in its 'geographical distribution', and (whilst declaring that the eggs were undescribed) of his referring categorically to the species having "been observed in the Wimmera district, Victoria, where . . . a nest containing five eggs was found in some porcupine grass". Again this reviewer introduces a personal note: In 1937, a report reached him of a parrot observed drinking at dusk, at a rock water-hole at Mt. Arapiles, in the Wimmera, the wing of which bird was said to agree 'feather for feather' with Gould's description of the Night Parrot. Whilst little credence could be given to the report, an opportunity for investigation was not to be forgone. Armed with a permit to collect one specimen (and as a precaution, one of the Ground Parrot), he deviated from his route on a Mallee visit, searched the area without success, made contact with a relative of the claimant, and finally saw the wing (previously said to have been lost), to recognize it at once as that of a nightjar.—C.E.B.

---

The date of publication was November 30, 1959.