

tail feathers set in pairs, the upper pair being the longest, and gradating to the under pair, which is the shortest.

I have given the new bird the specific name of *litoralis*, and the vernacular name of "The Lesser Rufous Bristle Bird."

For comparison I append the following measurements:—

| | Total length. | Wing. | Tail. | Tarsus. | Culmen. |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| <i>Sphenura broadbenti</i> | 10.5 | 3.7 | 5 | 1.4 | .7 |
| <i>Sphenura litoralis</i> | 9 | 3.4 | 4.5 | 1.2 | .6 |

Should Mutton Birds be Protected?

MUTTON-BIRDING (according to the species of Petrel) has almost become a national affair in some parts of New Zealand, in Southern Australia, notably on islands in Bass Strait (where alone it is reckoned that the number of young birds taken for food amounts annually to about 600,000), and on certain islets off South-Western Australia. In the interests of these sea-fowl, should they be protected?

Regarding Victoria the question has been brought somewhat prominently under notice lately by a sensational letter from Mr. Charles French, jun., Assistant Government Entomologist, which appeared in the Melbourne newspapers anent the wanton destruction of these interesting and profitable birds on the rookeries on Phillip Island, Western Port. Happily it is believed that the cruel cases cited by Mr. French are of rare occurrence. However, Mr. French was able to arouse the indignation of the Field Naturalists' Club, and it was resolved to recommend the Administrator of the *Game Act* to protect the Mutton Birds on the islands off the Victorian coast. Of course, there are other interests to be conserved—to wit, those of some of the islanders, whose staple food is Mutton Bird flesh and eggs when in season—therefore it is apprehended that any protection extended to the birds will not be absolute, but will merely regulate the traffic in eggs and young birds.

It was a coincidence that at the recent meeting of the Aust. O. U. at Adelaide, when it became known that the next annual meeting was to be held at Melbourne, an excursion to the rookeries on Phillip Island was casually mentioned, so that there would be an opportunity to ascertain whether or not it was time to regulate the birding traffic. Some of our older ornithologists have been keeping a "fatherly" eye on the rookeries on the island for years, to see if there be any diminution in the numbers of birds that annually visit the place. So far, the result of these casual observations has been slightly in favour of the birds.

It may be mentioned that this season there were an extraordinary number of egg-gatherers on the Cape Wollomai

rookeries. Not only did parties come from Melbourne, but from Geelong and even Ballarat. Several ladies accompanied their husbands, being provided with tents and the necessary utensils to enjoy the novelty of an egging picnic for a few days.

Forgotten Feathers.

ONE of the first-described nests of the Coachwhip Bird was recorded in a paper read by A. Dobree, Esq., before the Royal Society of Victoria on 27th August, 1861. The writer says:—"The present nest and eggs were obtained by me near the banks of the Yarra Yarra, near Heidelberg, on one of those points of land or 'bends' of the river still left in their original state, and where the underwood and tangle are extremely dense. . . . The female bird was sitting so closely as almost to allow herself to be captured, thus removing all doubt as to the identity of the nest and eggs. The nest was in the most tangled part of the thicket, and was placed in the forked branches of a shrub, about 4 feet from the ground. It is cup-shaped, about 5 inches outside diameter; the exterior of dry slender twigs, and the interior lined with thin fibres and a few pieces of horsehair, the latter evidently owing to the accidental vicinity of some farms; the whole structure is neither very solidly nor elaborately built. It contained two eggs—length *exactly one inch*, extreme width *three-quarters of an inch*. In shape they are not much pointed at the thinner end, and the greatest girth is about the middle. Their ground colour is pale greenish-blue, with streaks and dots of various sizes scattered pretty equally over the whole surface; these markings are of a brownish-black colour, and of two kinds—the one being very distinct and sharp, the other somewhat less numerous, more greyish, and much fainter, having the appearance of being under the shell. From the fact of the bird sitting so closely, I conclude that no more than two eggs are generally laid, though the present ones had not yet been perceptibly incubated. I regret to say I have kept no precise memorandum as to the date of the finding of the nest, but believe it to have been about the end of October."

It may be added that the Coachwhip Bird was heard in Willsmere Park, East Kew, amongst the dense scrub which then existed there, several times as late as the spring and summer of 1886. The bird was possibly there later, but an interval of four or five years elapsed before the observer's next visit, and then it was not to be heard or seen. A Satin Bower Bird was seen there during the same year.

Concerning *Ephthianura albifrons*, whose nest he regarded as up to that time undescribed, Mr. Dobree wrote (Trans. Roy. Soc. Vict., vol. v., p. 143):—"It may be met with in the dry portions of the swamps extending between the Saltwater