

the nest and eggs, but the owners could not be persuaded to return while the camera was in position. They had evidently received a fright at the old nest. It was worth while, however, to spend many hours in the vicinity, if only to hear the melody of the birds. The call most frequently used was a ventriloquial "Chup, chup," which seems to roll softly off the chest and swell powerfully as it leaves the beak. It is not unlike the vesper hymn of *Eopsaltria*. On 7th October a third egg was laid in the latest nest. Still the birds were doomed to disappointment; for on 12th October *one* of the trio was gone, the other two eggs were cold, and some of the horse-hair lining of the nest was ruffled. It is difficult to suggest what was the cause of this curious condition of things. The birds were whistling some distance away. They came no more to that nest, but still clung loyally to their chosen locality. But it was all of no avail. On the last day of that month I found an empty nest, without any signs of young having been in it. There seemed an additional touch of plaintiveness in the Whistlers' melody then; they had been thwarted for the third time.

I saw but little of *P. gilberti* subsequently until 22nd July, 1914, when, to my astonishment, the sweet, prolonged "Wce-e-ewoo" sounded in the same locality. I had never before heard the birds anywhere in the district during the winter months. On almost every day of the week following I visited the locality in search of the birds, but did not note them again till early in August. Then I saw the female, which was fairly tame, feeding among the leaves of trees, while her consort, which displayed much wariness, kept about the litter of dead leaves and bark on the ground. During the whole of that Spring they remained constant to the same tract of timber, but were more often heard than seen. The "wandering voice" departed with the spring, but again echoed about the same spot at the end of the winter of 1915.

Notes from Western Australia.

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DURING the past summer (1915-16) several birds seem to have extended their range further south than usual. Mr. J. Higham brought me a pair of Warbling Grass-Parrakeets (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) obtained at the Williams, 100 miles south-east of Perth, and informed me that Little Doves (*Geopelia cuneata*) had been seen in the same locality. I learn from Mr. M. W. Elliott that at Dumbleyung, 50 miles further to the south-east, Warbling Grass-Parrakeets also appeared. Mr. Elliott also sent me specimens of the Black Honey-eater (*Myzomela nigra*) and the White-fronted Honey-eater (*Gliciphila albifrons*), stating that he had not met with either species in his locality until this summer. He

informs me further that the Purple-crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*) remained about Dumbleyung all the summer instead of travelling further north, as is their usual custom, recorded by him in his recent notes in *The Emu*.

A very curious specimen of the Black Moor-Hen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) was brought to me on 27th March. Its plumage is white, hut it is marked all over with black streaks, resembling an immature Silver Gull. The eye was black, and the bill and legs normal in coloration, though decidedly pale, both green and red parts being very light. While I was examining the specimen Mr. Tom Carter came in, and, a few minutes later, Mr. L. G. Chandler, of Melbourne, also called, so that I had the pleasure of showing this remarkable bird to both these ornithologists. I will have a photograph of the specimen taken as soon as it is mounted, for publication in *The Emu*. It was shot at a swamp near Wanneroo, about seven miles north of Perth.

A few days ago, when at the Victoria Reservoir, one of the sources of Perth's water supply, situated a few miles from the city, in the Darling Range, I observed a Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*). In "The Birds of Australia," vol. i., p. 269, Mathews writes:—"A peculiar feature to me was, that I found *no* specimens from Australia or New Zealand in any other than full breeding plumage, although I examined specimens killed from November to August. Buller never noted any 'winter' plumage for the New Zealand form, yet Gould wrote:—'The beautiful frill which adorns the neck of the *P. australis* is acquired in the spring, worn during the breeding season, and then cast off, when the face becomes of a greyish-white, or similar in colour to the other part of the neck.' I suggest this was written from Gould's knowledge of the European bird, and not from the actual facts and would ask Australian ornithologists for further information." The specimen seen by me was absolutely without the ruff on the neck, but possessed the two ear-tufts; its throat, neck, and breast were almost white. Of course, I cannot be sure that it was not a young bird that had not acquired the ruff, but I record the observation for what it is worth. With a stop-watch I timed the period during which it stayed under water, and found that it varied from 20 seconds to 27 seconds, though on one occasion it reappeared in 8 seconds with what appeared to be a small fish in its beak.

Early in March I came upon a flock of Red-kneed Dottrels (*Erythrogonys cinctus*) on a swamp close to Perth. They were feeding on a mud-flat close to the water's edge or in the shallow water in company with Black-fronted Dottrels (*Elseya melanops*), Common Sandpipers (*Actites hypoleucus*), Sharp-tailed Stints (*Heteropygia acuminata*), and Little Stints (*Pisobia minuta*). In contrast to these other birds, which were feeding quietly, the Red-kneed Dottrels seemed much excited; every few minutes one would rush at another with his head held low, and the bird attacked would run away rapidly, with the second bird in pursuit



Crested Grebe.

in his somewhat curious attitude. Occasionally the bird attacked stood his ground, also with head lowered, and a short fight then ensued, the two sparring at one another like game-cocks. Sometimes a bird would appear to get into an even more frenzied state, start rushing about in a distracted way in every direction, and then fly round swiftly just over the surface of the water, in which he would finally alight and splash about with his wings, making a great commotion. These antics led me to suppose that the birds were thinking about breeding, though the time of year seemed wrong; but on returning home and consulting Mathews's "Birds of Australia," I found that the only nest of the Western form of this bird recorded was discovered by Mr. Tom Carter in the month of May. About 10 days later, I again visited the spot and found that the birds were still there, but seemed to have separated into pairs, each having its own little area of the mud-flat. No lights were seen, but the curious display, ending in a great splashing in the water, was again observed. A fortnight later the birds were still in the same spot, still in pairs, each moving around some particular clump of reeds on the mud-flat; but a search failed to discover any nests. The birds were extremely tame, coming within a few feet of my companion and myself as we waded about in the mud.

Herdsmen's Lake, near Perth, is probably known by name to most members of the Union, as many interesting swamp-birds were collected there years ago, and a number of these specimens have been made the types of the Western sub-species. A good many years ago an attempt was made to drain it, and a channel was cut towards the sea. This has resulted in carrying off so much water that most of the lake is now a dry reed-bed in the summer, though in winter it becomes a considerable sheet of water. The drainage water is carried into an adjacent valley among the sand-hills, where in winter it forms a considerable lake, full of gilgies (the small fresh-water crayfishes of Western Australia, *Cheraps preissii*), which are much sought after by Cormorants of several species. On a visit to this spot in March last I found that the water had nearly disappeared, leaving only a few small pools, about which a great number of Night-Herons (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) were congregated. I presume that the gilgies must have retreated into these pools, and that the Night-Herons were obtaining them, as there were at least 200 of these beautiful birds feeding there in the day-time. They would not, however, allow of a near enough approach to see what they were doing, but flew up into the trees. About two-thirds appeared to be young birds with brown-spotted plumage, the remainder fully adult. Among them were a few White-fronted Herons (*Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ*), Darters (*Anhinga novæ-hollandiæ*), Black Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Little Black Cormorants (*Mesocarbo ater*), and Little Cormorants (*Microcarbo melanoleucus*). On the same branch of one tree were sitting together a Night-Heron, a Darter, and a Crow—a curious "natural family," of which I should much like to have had a photograph.—3rd April, 1916.