

bang at the Hawks as a matter of course, not knowing they are destroying good friends, are away from the Commonwealth just now, so that the Raptorees have a chance to increase. The Harrier, on clear, warm afternoons in summer, has a habit of mounting high in the air and circling in a leisurely fashion at this altitude, as if for pure enjoyment.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., R.A.O.U. W. Devonport, Tasmania, 10/2/17.

From Magazines, &c.

The Value of Sub-species.—In *The Ibis*, January, 1917, p. 120, Mr. Gregory M. Mathews has contributed a most important letter. It speaks for itself, and terminates thus:—"I have concluded that the value of sub-species is almost negligible in Australian ornithology. In the Palaearctic Region they may be useful, but even here I think that they have been much over-rated; while if large series are examined from Australia, very many sub-specific forms can be differentiated, but larger series always link most extreme cases up very quickly. Consequently, in my 'Birds of Australia' I have depreciated sub-species. . . . This course was adopted nearly two years ago."

Mr. Mathews is to be congratulated on the frankness of this admission. Many of his best friends in Australia were getting bewildered in the mazes of his sub-species and consequent nomenclature, while he will win many who were flatly opposed to his system. But, in fairness to both supporters and opponents, Mr. Mathews, likewise in justice to himself, not to mention *the science*, should have made known the purport of his letter, considering that he changed his attitude regarding sub-species "nearly two years ago." No people are more interested than Australians in Mr. Mathews's work.—A. J. C.

Obituary Notice.

NORTH.—On the 6th May, 1917, at his residence, "Hillcrest," Darling-street, Chatswood, Sydney, Alfred John, the beloved husband of Clara R. North, and second son of the late Henry and Mary T. North, Moonee Ponds, Victoria, Ornithologist to the Australian Museum, Sydney, aged 61 years.

THE friends of the late Mr. A. J. North, C.M.B.O.U., will greatly regret his demise, which occurred somewhat suddenly from heart failure on Sunday, 6th May. His remains were buried at the Gore Hill Cemetery, Sydney.

The late ornithologist was born 11th June, 1855, at North Melbourne, and was educated at the Public School, and subsequently at the Grammar School, South Melbourne. He was apprenticed to the jeweller's trade, and worked assiduously at his

calling many years for Mr. Henry Young, then in Little Collins-street, Melbourne. He joined the Australian Museum, Sydney, in December, 1886, when he was engaged temporarily to write a "Catalogue" of Australian eggs (No. 12 of the Australian Museum), which appeared in 1889. In August, 1891, Mr. North was permanently appointed Assistant in Ornithology, a position he held till his death.

Mr. North contributed to various scientific periodicals, including the "Records" of his own institution, but his greatest work was the "Special Catalogue No. 1," being the second edition of "Catalogue No. 12," entirely rewritten, with additions, and styled "Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania," in four volumes, quarto size, and published by the trustees, under Mr. R. Etheridge, J.P., curator. The work was adorned with excellent type-blocks of many birds, while the egg illustrations were by process-photography, a small edition being hand-coloured. Although an inordinate length of time was taken in the publication of the work, it reflected much laborious toil of a painstaking kind by the author, and was wonderfully accurate. It was what was omitted that disappointed students. Mr. North had a dread of amateur contemporary writers, and, rather than incorporate anything that he deemed doubtful, ignored the authors altogether. This, however, did not detract from his personal work, which was much, in the interests of Australian ornithology.

For his ornithological attainments Mr. North was elected a Colonial Member of the British Ornithologists' Union—an honour which can only be held by ten persons at one time in the British Overseas Dominions. He was also a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union. Mr. North did not associate himself with the Australasian Union, probably because for many years his health was extremely delicate, and he had not strength to attend regularly at his Museum, or to do much work.

Mr. North was an original member of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, and remained a member for over 30 years. In boyhood's days his first field outings were along the foreshore of the bay between Sandridge (now Port Melbourne) and St. Kilda, where Red-capped Dottrels used to nest on the sand and "Tangs" (*Ephthianura*) bred in the short *Ricinocarpus* bushes, while many first bird-observing lessons were gained among the manna gums and by the rush-covered natural lagoon which teemed with waterfowl in Albert Park.

Mr. North, in his day, was a swift athlete, and on one occasion, with a few yards handicap, he beat L. L. Mount, the Canadian champion. Mr. North was younger brother to Bendigo's successful citizen, Mr. H. Y. North.

