

Monthly Conversazioni.

THE first monthly conversazione of the R.A.O.U. was held at the Union's room at Temple Court on 4th July, 1917, at 8 p.m. There were 28 present. The vice-president, Dr. J. A. Leach, occupied the chair.

Mr. W. B. Alexander exhibited, on behalf of Mr. Ashby, of South Australia, skins of a new variety of Parrot (*Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis*), and discussed the relationship of the new form with *P. adelaidæ*, *P. elegans*, *P. nigrescens*, and *P. flaveolus*. Mr. Kershaw exhibited skins of *P. flaveolus* and *P. adelaidæ* in illustration of Mr. Alexander's remarks. Mr. Alexander also exhibited a pair of skins of the White-winged Tern (*H. leucoptera*), an irruption of which had appeared in Western Australia this year. Prior to this there were very few authentic records of this bird in Australia. Mr. Kershaw made some interesting remarks re skins of rare birds—*Geoffroyus maclennani* and *Eclectus macgillivrayi*—that he had procured at the Claudie River, Queensland. Mr. A. C. Stone exhibited the nest of *Glyciphila fasciata*, which had been forwarded by Mr. F. C. Berney from Queensland. Mr. Le Souëf read letters from Dr. W. Hornaday, of U.S.A., and Mr. J. Buckland, of England, dealing with the protection of birds and the plumage traffic. Mr. Buckland stated that the British Government had prohibited the importation of avian plumage as a war regulation. Mr. Le Souëf then showed a very fine series of pictures dealing with the subject of Ibises, most of which had been taken in Riverina, N.S.W. He indicated how very beneficial these birds are to agriculturists, and how necessary it was that they should receive the utmost protection. He also showed some unique pictures of the locust, an insect that is particularly acceptable to all species of Ibis. Live specimens of the White and Straw-necked Ibis were also exhibited in illustration of his remarks. Mr. Le Souëf was heartily applauded for the information he had given. Messrs. Stone, Howe, Ross, and Mattingley, in discussing the subject, also contributed many interesting notes. Mr. G. F. Hill then contributed a paper dealing with the nidification of the Rainbow Pitta (*P. iris*) in the Kimberley and Darwin districts, and called attention to the unusually open nesting-sites utilized by this species.

The second (August) conversazione of the R.A.O.U. was held on Wednesday, 1st, at the R.A.O.U. room, Temple Court, Collins-street, and there was an excellent attendance of members. Mr. W. H. D. Le Souëf occupied the chair. The subject before members was "Penguins," and Dr. Nicholls contributed a masterly paper dealing with his investigations at the Penguin rookeries at Phillip Island. Numerous birds had been captured, and a very complete series of measurements obtained. These proved conclusively that only the Little Penguin inhabits the rookeries at Phillip Island. It was found that the male was

slightly larger than the female. The paper was illustrated by a splendid series of skins of the Little Penguin in different stages of development, and some excellent pictures that had been obtained by Mr. T. H. Tregellas.

Mr. Le Souëf then screened many unique studies of different species of Penguins, and his remarks upon them were greatly appreciated by members. Eggs of several species of Penguins were exhibited by Mr. A. C. Stone.

The third (September) conversazione of the R.A.O.U. was held on Wednesday, 5th, at the room, Temple Court, and a fair number of members attended. The chair was occupied by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, who welcomed to the meeting Mr. Quinney, of Mortlake, and Miss Cayley, of Sydney. Mr. Alexander and Dr. Nicholls exhibited skins of the Little Penguin from Western Australia, and called the attention of members to the coloration of the backs of the birds, which was somewhat brighter than is found in the eastern birds. The subject for the evening was "Honey-eaters," and Mr. W. H. D. Le Souëf opened the subject with a fine series of lantern slides dealing with many species. From his comments on the pictures members gleaned much interesting information. Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley then contributed some interesting notes on the subject, his remarks being illustrated by some praiseworthy pictures of many forms of Victorian Honey-eaters. Messrs. Alexander, Stone, Keep, and Ross took part in the discussion which followed. Mr. F. E. Wilson then read a letter from Private L. G. Chandler, which showed that, in spite of exacting military duties in France, he was still able to gain a little time for nature study.

A feature of the evening was the series of eggs of Honey-eaters exhibited by Mr. A. C. Stone, and about which he made some interesting remarks. A fairly extensive series of skins of Honey-eaters from the Union's collection was tabled, and a comparison of them added much to the evening's enjoyment.

About Members.

Ornithologist at the Australian Museum.—The trustees of the above institution have decided not to fill permanently for the present the position of ornithologist, rendered vacant by the death of Mr. A. J. North, C.M.B.O.U. Mr. A. F. Basset Hull, R.A.O.U., has offered his services in an honorary capacity, and the Museum trustees have accepted the offer.

Mr. Basset Hull is to be congratulated (and members of the R.A.O.U. may well congratulate themselves, likewise the trustees of the Museum concerned) on his patriotism in giving up gratuitously so much of his valuable time in the interests of the ornithology of his State, and incidentally of the Commonwealth.

