

From Magazines, &c.

IN the *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales*, vol. xxvi., part 4, recently received, Mr. A. J. North, in brief but interesting notes on Cuckoos, claims that the eggs of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) and the "Rufous-tailed" Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalis*) had not been previously recorded from the nests of the Lambert (Variegated) Wren (*Malurus lamberti*). He is correct regarding the smaller Cuckoo, but Dr. E. P. Ramsay has been mentioned as the original authority for the Lambert Wren as a foster-parent of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo—*vide Vict. Nat.*, vol. xiv., p. 101 (Nov., 1897).

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AT the October (1901) meeting of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, Mr. A. J. North, C.M.Z.S., contributed a note on the synonymy of *Malurus cyaneus* and *M. superbus*. The bird named *Motacilla cyanea* by Ellis was met with during the stay of Captain Cook's vessels, the *Resolution* and *Discovery*, in January, 1777, at Adventure Bay, Bruni Island, near the south-east coast of Tasmania. At that time Bass Strait had not been discovered, and the latter island was regarded as the southern extremity of Australia, and is so figured by Ellis, who was assistant-surgeon to both vessels, on the chart accompanying his work, published in 1782. The name of *Malurus cyaneus*, Ellis, Mr. North states, will therefore have to stand for the Tasmanian species of Superb Warbler or Wren, *i.e.*, the Long-tailed (*gouldi*), and that of *Malurus superbus*, Shaw, for the well-known Blue Wren inhabiting south-eastern Australia.

According to the strict law of priority no doubt Mr. North is correct, and he is to be commended for his discovery—nearly as

good as naming a new species. But is it wise to correct a mistake that has lasted for a century and a quarter and by usage has become accepted? Any alteration of nomenclature of such a common species as the familiar Blue Wren will surely lead to confusion, except, perhaps, amongst cabinet workers.

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Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania.—A volume (1900-01) recently issued contains a "Systematic List of Tasmanian Birds," by Colonel W. V. Legge, F.Z.S., &c., President of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union.

In 1886 a "Systematic List" was drawn up by Colonel Legge, the various orders, families, and sub-families into which the Tasmanian birds were divided being classified on the same system as that adopted in his "Birds of Ceylon." That list has now been revised, and the universally received nomenclature of the "British Museum Catalogue" employed, while the vernacular names adopted are from the Australasian Science Association's List (1898).

In his introductory remarks Colonel Legge drops an interesting hint. The Tit found by Gould in Tasmania, and named after the Rev. J. T. Ewing (*Acanthiza ewingi*), has since been considered identical with the well-known "Brown-tail" (*A. diemenensis*); but Colonel Legge is of opinion that the fact of the species being identical has not been established, as further research may lead to the re-discovery of the Ewing Tit.

The list, which enumerates three species short of 200, should prove a useful reference, not only to Tasmanian workers, but to Australians. Who is the forthcoming ornithologist to write the "history" of the 197 species through Tasmanian spectacles?

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"QUEENSLAND Birds, Partly or Wholly Insectivorous," is the title of a paper contributed by Mr. Kendall Broadbent, of the Queensland Museum staff, to the *Proceedings and Transactions Royal Geographical Society of Australia* (Q.), vol. xvii.

The list mentions over 300 species of birds, arranged in parallel columns, under "Common name," "Scientific name," and "Geographical range," with various footnotes, references showing whether the birds feed on "small mammals, reptiles, and insects," "insects and scrub shells," "fruit and insects," "fruit and seeds," &c.

Mr. Broadbent is sound generally in his scientific nomenclature, but his long and varied experience collecting in the bush has apparently led him into some bush or local phraseology regarding many vernacular names. The following may be cited as examples:—"Creek Kingfisher" for the Blue or Azure Kingfisher; "Chinchilla Diamond-Bird" for the *Pardalotus assimilis*, which is found in other localities from Queensland to Victoria; "Cardwell Diamond-Bird" for *P. affinis*, of

still wider range. The Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Graucali*) are all called "Mutton-Birds," the Oreoica the "Ventriloquist-Bird," the Drongo-Shrike has "Fish-tail" added to its name, and the *Smicrornis* is termed the "Wee-bill Gerygone," &c., &c.

Regarding the geographical range, Mr. Broadbent records for the first time several species new for Queensland, namely:—*Pachycephala lanioides*, *Pœcilodyras cerviniventris*, *Menura superba*,* *Acanthiza pyrrhopygia*, *Calamanthus fuliginosus*, *C. campestris*, *Poephila acuticauda*, and *Cinclosoma castanonotum*. But probably more proof will have to be forthcoming before students will believe that *Pachycephala gilberti* (Gould) is found at Cape York Peninsula and *Eopsaltria gularis* (Quoy) in Victoria.

When the Aust. O.U. takes in hand its official "Check List of Australian Birds," Mr. Broadbent's paper will prove extremely useful as a local reference.

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IN "Appendix F," *Report on Exploration of North-West Kimberley*, 1901, by Fred. S. Brockman (Leader), Mr. A. W. Milligan, Honorary Ornithologist to the Western Australian Museum, has reported, through Mr. Bernard H. Woodward, F.G.S. (the Curator), on the birds collected by Dr. F. M. House, the naturalist who accompanied the expedition.

The collection contains 43 skins, the number of species being 29. Dr. House is evidently a discriminating collector, for out of that small consignment one species is quite new to science, while five are new for the district of North-Western Australia—a very creditable result, considering the difficulties of moving with a restless exploring party.

The new species is an extremely interesting one—an *Amytis*—which has been deservedly named *housei* by Mr. Milligan, after its discoverer, but on account of its characteristic colouring to be known on the vernacular list as the Black Grass-Wren. Dr. House's field observations are that—

"This bird was first found near Camp F.B. 25, where the surrounding country was exceedingly rough, and strewn with piled-up masses of sandstone, in colour chiefly shading from red to black. It was observed running over the boulders, with which its colouring harmonizes so perfectly that it might easily pass unnoticed. In running the bird lowers the head and tail, giving it a peculiar appearance, not unlike that which the Pheasant Coucal presents when running on the ground. Its distribution seemed to be entirely determined by the colour of the rocks. It was only observed running over the sandstone, and only in places where the colouring of the rocks harmonized with its own."

* Precise locality given is King's Creek. King's Creek comes out of the main range at Pilton, and runs through the Darling Downs for about 28 miles, joining the Condamine River at Clifton. The creek is famous for fossils. Timber-getters report that its head waters are crowned with fern trees, overshadowed with principally "spotted gums" (eucalypts), and that the gullies thereabouts are scratched all over by Brush Turkeys, or *Talegallus*, as well as by Lyre-Birds.—EDS.

The following is Mr. Milligan's technical description of the new species :—"Head and neck, sides of face, chin, and throat lamp black; regularly and evenly striated with white silky feathers; faintly tinged on sides of face with faint chestnut markings, more emphatic on chin and throat; whole of back and upper tail coverts very deep dull chestnut; upper portion of back showing black feathers and silky white stems; lower portion of back showing faint striation caused by light chestnut-coloured stems; tail lamp black; tail feathers eight, terminating, excepting 6th and 8th, co-equally; chest and abdomen lamp black, the former distinctly striated with silky white, the latter much fainter; legs black; wings, 1st quill materially shorter than 2nd, similarly and successively 2nd, 3rd, and 4th; 5th, 6th, and remaining quills almost of equal length; wings black, upper coverts burnished and edged with chestnut, and showing chestnut shafts. Under surface of wings blackish. Total length, 8 inches; tail, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; tarsus, 1 inch; mandibles—from gape to point $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch, from forehead to point $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch; wing, 3 inches."

The species new for the North-West are :—*Chibia bracteata* (Drongo), *Graucalus hypoleucus* (White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike), *Malurus amabilis* (Lovely Wren), *Pardalotus melanocephalus* (Black-headed Pardalote), and *Turnix olivii* (Olive Quail).

As the first three have been recorded for the Northern Territory (of South Australia), it is only natural to find their habitat extended to North-Western Australia, but it is an ornithological surprise to find the Black-headed Pardalote of north-eastern parts in the north-west. Regarding the Olive Quail very little is known. The original specimen (described by the Hon. Walter Rothschild) was secured on the north-eastern coast. Those observed by Dr. House in the north-west were in sandstone country, in the neighbourhood of Charnley and Calder Rivers. Only two or three birds were seen together.

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"ON a Collection of Birds from Western Australia." This somewhat technical article is contributed by Mr. Robert Hall to *The Ibis* (January and July parts), a journal which, by the way, is to be commended for the prominence it has hitherto given to Australian ornithology. Any student who does not read *The Ibis* is at once "out of the running."

The collection, the subject of Mr. Hall's remarks, was obtained by himself between Albany and the Houtman's Abrolhos, from 23rd September to 8th November, 1899, and represents 69 species, numbering 156 specimens. To secure this collection three classes of country were invaded—the heavily-timbered tracts of the south-west, the flat region above them, and the islets and shoals of the Abrolhos, some 50 miles off the coast. Although the last-mentioned locality has been fairly well worked

by previous collectors (individually mentioned by Mr. Hall), nevertheless Mr. Hall was enabled to pick up a few "strays"—namely, *Cinclorhamphus rufescens* (Rufous Song-Lark), *Halcyon sanctus* (Sacred Kingfisher), *Petræca goodenovii* (Red-capped Robin), and *Phaps elegans* (Brush Bronze-wing). At the end of the article, in the form of an appendix, is a "Revised List of the Birds (48 species) Found on the Houtman's Abrolhos and their Nesting Dates." Regarding the description of the wonderful bird congregations there, the writings of Gilbert and other former visitors to the locality are fully confirmed, with a few fresh sidelights added. Here is an example: In mentioning the Sooty Terns and Noddies nesting in close proximity to each other, he states:—"When some of the eggs are exchanged the birds make no objection, but 'sit on.' The 'Noddies' will hatch the 'Sooties' eggs, and feed the young until they are ready to run about, but no longer."

Touching *Petræca campbelli*, Mr. Hall's field observations confirm this species of Dr. Bowdler Sharpe. "I was specially pleased," Mr. Hall states, "to find between 15 and 20 individuals of this species in the hill-country of Western Australia, and each time to note the large black cap and small white forehead that convinced me of its being distinct from the eastern *P. leggit*."

On the other hand, in the author's opinion *Rhipidura preissi* (Western Fantail) is identical with the familiar *R. albiscapa* of eastern parts.

Regarding the western White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus chloropsis*), Mr. Hall writes:—"From personal observations, and from my collection of skins, I conclude that there is a western representative of *M. lunulatus*," and questions the wisdom of Dr. Gadow in amalgamating the two species (*vide* Brit. Mus. Cat., vol. ix., p. 204). Mr. Hall was probably not aware that the species had again been separated in a more recent work—"Nests and Eggs" (Campbell), page 361.

Mr. Hall has a "passion" for Pardalotes. Here is a good sample of elaboration:—"I secured a specimen of a Pardalote to determine the species, and concluded that it was *P. affinis*. Upon re-examination at home I was very much surprised to find the wings marked with white as in *P. ornatus*, while the bold specula were yellow. This constituted a phase not hitherto recorded, as *P. ornatus* is only known to assume the scarlet tipping. If the sub-species, *P. assimilis*, is allowed to have so wide a range in the colouring of the speculum as scarlet, crimson, orange, or yellow, the same may be the case here. I feel disposed to consider it merely a matter of time to discover that birds with the scarlet and lemon specula exist in one or more areas of the Continent, and then the species will be placed on the same footing as the sub-species as regards the speculum."

"As for the species, *P. affinis* (always yellow-tipped), I believe

it to be only a phase of the sub-species, *P. assimilis*. On a previous occasion (*Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S. Wales*, vol. xxiv., p. 472, 1889) I proved *P. assimilis* to have only the third quill edged with white (scarlet speculum), and the speculum may be yellow, just as in the 'third and fourth quill' phase. If this is really so, and I see no reason to the contrary, there is nothing to distinguish it from *P. affinis*. Proof will doubtless be forthcoming in support of my view, as specimens come in from time to time, even if the delay is as long as in the finding of the specimen under review. I shall then place *P. affinis* along with *P. assimilis*."

Altogether, Mr. Hall's article, especially regarding descriptions of fledglings and immature birds, is a valuable contribution to ornithological research.

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DR. J. W. B. GUNNING, Director of the Pretoria Museum and Zoological Gardens, sends lists of recent additions of mammals and birds to the gardens. Among the latter the following Australian species appear:—Winking Owl (*Ninox connivens*), Chestnut-eared Finches (*Taniopygia castanotis*), Spotted-sided Finches (*Steganopleura guttata*), Long-tailed Finches (*Poephila acuticauda*), "Parson" Finches (*P. cincta*), Gouldian Finches (*P. gouldiae*), Banded Finch (*Stictoptera bichenovii*), Blue Mountain Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus novæ-hollandiæ*), Crested Pigeons (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), Magpie Geese (*Anseranas semipalmata*), Laughing Jackasses (*Dacelo gigas*), two Emus (presented by the late Right Hon. C. J. Rhodes), besides six Australian "Moonies, whatever these may be. Dr. Gunning would be glad of any exchanges with or donations to the Pretoria Gardens.

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COCKATOOS AS "RESISTANTS."—A resident in the Northern Territory, whose homestead is adjacent to a section of the overland telegraph line between the Katherine and Daly Waters stations, explains in a recent letter the most frequent causes of delay in the transmission of messages as follows:—"At present (1st May) there is a frequent but brief loss of current taking place, which has caused much annoyance and baffled the authorities, because it occurs mostly in the morning and evening. Operators sent from the two stations to investigate have discovered that Cockatoos (Galahs), which frequent a pool of water near the spot where the leakage is located, perch on the top telegraph wire, and, Parrot-like, use their beaks upon the second, but only for a moment; with a shrill cry they take flight. In the meantime, however, the current has escaped, and if a message were going through its continuity was broken."—*The Argus*, 4/6/02.