

Thompson), and all had the snow-white bases to the feathers. Which were they, Ravens or Crows? Has any Tasmanian specimen been found with the dark feather bases? It would be interesting to have this point cleared up, and also to hear from other members whether the feather test has been found uniformly reliable.—I am, &c.,

H. STUART DOVE.

Launceston, 16/7/07.

Obituary Notice.

PROFESSOR ALFRED NEWTON, M.A., F.R.S., ETC.

ALL bird-lovers will deeply regret the death of Professor Alfred Newton, F.R.S., especially many Australian students, who from time to time received his kind encouragement and sound advice in the field of ornithology. Although an Honorary Member of the A.O.U., out of sympathy with the Australian workers he forwarded the ordinary subscription since the Union's inception. His last literary contribution, which appeared in *The Emu*, was in the form of a letter to Mr. Ernest Scott on the subject of Dampier's "Galdens." * To do justice to the life and labour of so great an ornithologist as the late Professor would need a very able pen and a vast amount of research, therefore the editors take the liberty of giving Mr. H. E. Dresser's (a member, by the way, of the A.O.U.) sympathetic remarks as they appeared in *The Zoologist*, 15th July, 1907:—

"Zoologists in general, but especially ornithologists and oologists, will deplore the loss of Professor Alfred Newton, one of our most distinguished and soundest zoologists, who passed away on the 7th of June. Professor Newton, who held the Chair of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Cambridge since 1866, was well known and most highly esteemed, not only in Great Britain, but in every country where zoology, and more especially ornithology, is studied, and his writings, though many, were not so voluminous as they might well have been, for he never put pen to paper until he had fully studied his subject, and in consequence nothing that he wrote will pass away, but will stand as a lasting memorial of the care and hard work he bestowed on all that he undertook. Extreme accuracy was with him the cornerstone of all his work, and he would spend weeks of labour and earnest research in verifying any reference. It is scarcely necessary here to enumerate all the works he has written, but amongst these I may especially name his 'Dictionary of Birds,' written with the co-operation of Messrs. Hans Gadow, Richard Lydekker, Charles S. Ray, and Robert W. Shufeldt, a work which is

* Vol. vi., p. 151—a subject continued in the present issue (p. 101) by a letter from Mr. Tom Carter.—EDS.

indispensable to every working ornithologist; vols. i. and ii. of Yarrell's 'British Birds'; his 'Ootheca Wolleyana,' a catalogue of the celebrated collection of eggs originally formed by the late John Wolley, and completed by Professor Newton himself, which, though commenced as long ago as 1866, was only completed shortly before his death; and his various papers on the Great Auk or Garefowl.

"As one of the founders—probably the chief of the small band of ornithologists who founded, nearly fifty years ago, the British Ornithologists' Union—Professor Newton and his coadjutors gave an impetus to the study of ornithology which has had most gratifying and lasting results.

"A severe though a very fair critic, and a hard hitter when he deemed it necessary to administer salutary correction, Professor Newton was a firm friend, most courteous, genial, and pleasant in manner in personal intercourse, and especially kind and helpful towards young ornithologists; therefore he was greatly loved and revered by all who came in personal contact with him. It was a constant custom with him to be at home on Sunday evenings to young students of zoology, and all who have taken part in these pleasant reunions will know how helpful he invariably was to any young man who was working at any branch of zoology. In this, as in his influence on the study of ornithology, he will be sorely missed, and there is no one who can take his place.

"Although permanently lame, owing to an accident in early childhood, he did good work as an out-door naturalist, and travelled considerably, visiting Norway, Lapland, Spitzbergen, Iceland, the West Indies, and North America, making excellent use, as his writings show, of his opportunities to study the habits of birds in their native haunts.

"A keen oologist, Professor Newton amassed a very good collection of eggs, almost entirely of Palæarctic species, and of some, chiefly northern, a very large series—and this valuable collection he has bequeathed to the Cambridge University Museum. His chief hobby was, however, his library of ornithological and zoological books, and whenever a rare ornithological work was in the market he would use every endeavour to secure it, usually with success. Hence this library, which he has also bequeathed to the Cambridge University, is extremely rich, and contains several of the rarest and most valuable ornithological and oological works.

"Though very broad-minded, Professor Newton was somewhat conservative, and to the last he was strongly averse to the extreme subdivision of species, often on the very slightest grounds, now so prevalent amongst some ornithologists of the present day, as also to the use (or, we may almost say, abuse) of trinomial appellations, he being essentially a binomialist.

"Professor Newton was the fifth son of William Newton, of Elvedon Hall, Suffolk, formerly M.P. for Ipswich, and was born at Geneva on the 11th of June, 1829. Educated at first by a private tutor, he graduated at Cambridge in 1853, and was appointed Travelling Fellow of Magdalene College in 1854, and then visited the countries above enumerated. He was subsequently a vice-president of the Royal, Linnean, and Zoological Societies, and was awarded the gold medal of the Linnean Society, and in 1900 one of the Royal Society's medals.

"I first made Professor Newton's acquaintance in 1858, on my return to England from Finland, when he came to my father's town house to examine the collection I had made during my sojourn in Sweden and Finland, and since then he has been the most constant and truest friend it has been my good fortune to possess."

Bird Observers' Club.

THE ordinary monthly meeting of the Club was held at Oxford Chambers, Bourke-street, Melbourne, on 17th April, 1907. Mr. James Thompson was host and chairman for the evening. An interesting paper by Mr. J. Batey, of Drouin, on "The Wedge-tailed Eagle," was attentively listened to by members, from which many interesting notes were obtained and discussed. A field note from Mr. G. E. Shepherd, of Somerville, on the Black-checked Falcon chasing a Pigeon was also interesting. (See *Emu*, vol. vii., p. 41.) Mr. Christian, Kamarooka estate, Vic., contributed some notes, and mentioned that although he had only been in the district a few weeks he had listed over a hundred species of birds. Mr. A. G. Campbell showed a variety of skins, including those of the Whistling Eagle, Little Eagle, Brown Hawk, Black, Grey, Black-cheeked, and Little Falcons, Black-shouldered Kite, Goshawk, and Sparrow-Hawk. Mr. J. A. Ross exhibited two mounted specimens—Nankeen Kestrel and Black-cheeked Falcon—the latter a very handsome male in splendid plumage. The hon. secretary showed an instructive series of eggs of various birds of prey. Mr. Mattingley's exhibits were two varieties of a so-called snake—Frazer's delma—and he explained that many of the birds under review were partial to them as food. After the nature notes were discussed, Mr. C. L. Barrett drew attention to the wholesale destruction of the Black Swan on the Gippsland Lakes and elsewhere, and moved that the hon. secretary write to the Inspector of Fisheries requesting that it be better protected.

The June monthly meeting of the Bird Observers' Club was held at the residence of Mr. A. J. Campbell, Armadale. Among the exhibits was a fine series of New Zealand bush scenes, photographed by Mr. J. C. M'Lean, depicting haunts of endemic birds, some of which are fast disappearing. A unique picture by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley was also shown—a brooding Egret (*Mesophoyx plumifera*) on its nest, photographed in the tree-tops at close quarters. The fine heronry where the picture was taken was afterwards devastated by plume-hunters for ladies' hats, the breeding season notwithstanding. (See this issue, p. 65.)

The subject for the evening being "Magpies," Mr. Isaac Batey, Drouin, contributed a written statement roughly covering observations extending over a period of 60 years. Members applauded Mr. Batey's remarks when, as a practical farmer, he defended the Magpie (*Gymnorhina*) as a bird undoubtedly beneficial to mankind, although he admitted it took grain