

them give us in form, colour, and song. Australian producers appear slow to recognise the great utility of birds, because their (the birds') work is mostly unobserved. The diet of numerous birds consists mainly of the lower forms of life—insects, and such like crawling creatures. Experts who have studied the question know how the lowly hordes of insect pests increase, often at an astounding rate, and what a destructive power they are to almost every living green thing. Happily this insect life is kept in check by birds. Contemplate what would become of the forest and field—the pastures of man and beast—were there no birds? The land would in time become a wilderness. In endeavouring to combat the attacks or increase of insect pests there is no “insecticide” so cheap or so effective as the original and natural one—birds; therefore, let us at all times, in all places, and by all means protect our useful native birds from destruction, not to mention the humanitarian and ethical side of the question. Referring *en passant* to the humanitarian and ethical side, the study of Mr. A. Mattingley's graphic pen and picture description in the last issue of *The Emu*, concerning the ruthless destruction of beautiful snow-white Herons in Riverina by the plume-hunters, should spur all bird-lovers into hot action.

In all probability the following session of the A.O.U. will be held in Melbourne next November, 1908. I would suggest that we make that session famous by calling a congress of all persons interested in bird protection. We could at least have a conference of one delegate from each State (following the example of the kingdoms of Europe) appointed by the respective administrators of the *Game Acts*, and invite them to consider as a basis the Model Bird Protection Bill which our member, Mr. C. F. Belcher, M.A., LL.B., is preparing for the Council. The contingent expenses of such a conference would be trivial compared with the importance of such a national concern, and I have no doubt that the Government of Victoria, if approached through the Hon. the Premier or the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture, would readily guarantee the small expense.

Therefore, in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I beg to move, accordingly, that a deputation be appointed by this session, or the Council of the A.O.U., to wait upon the Hon. the Premier or the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture, Victoria, regarding this matter early next year.

Report of Honorary Secretary.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Your Council has much pleasure in presenting to you the sixth annual report, embodying a *précis* of the transactions of the A.O.U. for the year ending 30th June, 1907. During the past year excellent progress has been made in the Union's affairs.

Applications for membership have been increasing, and there are indications that the initial efforts of the Union are being surely though slowly crowned with success. The objects for which the society was founded—namely, the advancement and popularisation of the science of ornithology and the protection of useful and ornamental avifauna—are being steadily proceeded with, more especially as regards the popularisation and protection of our bird-life. It is, however, desirable that the study of the more abstruse problems relating to the structure and uses of the organs of our birds, as well as research in other neglected fields of study of the ornis, be systematically undertaken. The impetus given to nature study in our primary schools is bearing excellent fruit, and the desirability of the protection of our useful birds is being thereby more prominently impressed on the minds of the juvenile section of the community, which in recent years was responsible for much wanton destruction, and it is pleasing to know that, generally speaking, the avifauna, at present, is less molested by those of immature years than formerly. Some students, however, in their eagerness to excel in the study of our bird-life, collect specimens and eggs needlessly for identification, and it is to be hoped that the evils attendant on such practices will be remedied by their instructors.

Much desirable work is being accomplished by our light-keepers, who forward useful and informative notes on birds that happen to strike the lighthouses whilst migrating. The Council would be pleased to receive any further notes on the migration of birds up to the end of the current year, so that they can be tabulated.

Application was made to the Council of the A.O.U. to appoint delegates to represent the Union at the Seventh International Zoological Congress, held at Boston, Mass., U.S. America, in August, 1907. Two representative members of the Union were appointed as deputies.

Endeavours have been made to have the laws relating to the protection of Egrets and Birds-of-Paradise made more effective, since large numbers of these birds are annually destroyed for their beautiful plumes, which are used for millinery purposes.

Coloured plates of unfigured Australasian birds will be continued in *The Emu*, but as the regularity of the production of these plates depends on the financial condition of the coloured figure fund, which is raised by voluntary subscription, it is to be hoped that further donations will be forwarded by members to assist in this useful work, thereby advancing the status of the journal.

The thanks of the Council are again due to Col. C. S. Ryan for the gratuitous use of his rooms for Council meetings, and also to the Zoological Society of Melbourne for the storage in their fireproof room of the books, &c., of the Union.