

plums, pears, apples, &c. When on a raid, a sentinel is placed in a high tree, while the others feed below, and at the slightest sign of danger he swoops from his perch with a loud call, and the whole flock rises into the air and flies away. Yellow-faced Honey-eaters (*Ptilotis chrysops*) are very numerous, and during the course of an afternoon's ramble as many as ten or twelve nests may be observed. Nests are placed in small trees and bushes, and rarely exceed the height of 6 feet, and I have seen them as low as 2 feet from the ground. When only two eggs are laid, and one is taken, the birds destroy the remaining egg and desert the nest, but if the full number is three and one is purloined no notice is taken of the robbery. Wattle-Birds (*Anellobia carunculata*) are plentiful, the bush resounding with their queer calls—"Chock-o-lock!" "Kurra-choc!" "Ker-choc-chock!" "Peet!"

Neither Mr. A. G. Campbell \* nor Mr. R. Hall † states very definitely in what positions the Flame-breasted Robin (*Petræca phœnicea*) places its nest, and as the birds build regularly in this district (2,000 odd feet above sea level) the following notes may be of interest:—In this locality the nest is invariably situated in a small cavity in a rock bank, generally under the shelter of an overhanging tussock of grass. The materials used in its construction are wool, horsehair, and cowhair, firmly welted together; sometimes a few lichens ornament the exterior, but such is not always the case. November and December are the breeding months, though one or two nests may be found in January still containing young. Two, three, or four eggs constitute a clutch. I have never seen a nest in any other situation than that described—perhaps because the crevices of the rocks are to be found everywhere in the slate formations, and no trouble is needed on the part of the birds to find a suitable site. On 12th November I discovered a Rufous-breasted Thickhead (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) greedily devouring a large emperor gum moth, and this is, I think, a new departure on the part of the birds, from which great benefit will be derived. The only other birds (exclusive of Owls and other nocturnal birds) that feed on this pest are the Gang-Gang Cockatoos (*Callocephalum galeatum*), which tear open the tough cocoon to get at the chrysalis inside.—NOEL E. MADDISON. Wood's Point.

### From Magazines, &c.

A WONDERFUL MIGRANT.—To *The Lyttelton Times* (N.Z.), of 11th September, 1908, Mr. James Drummond, F.Z.S., contributed an interesting account of the Barred-rumped Godwit

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† "Insectivorous Birds,"

(*Limosa novæ-zealandiæ*),\* which he considers to be the "greatest migrant in the world." It is believed that the Godwit breeds in Eastern Siberia and migrates to New Zealand, returning again to its breeding grounds in the north. Mr. Drummond is endeavouring to obtain fuller information and reliable data, and has communicated with scientific men in Russia, China, Japan, Formosa, and other countries along the route which the Godwit is believed to follow. Meanwhile, a mass of valuable information has been obtained in New Zealand. From Mr. R. H. Matthews, of Kaitaia, north of Auckland, Mr. Drummond has received some notes. The following is from *The Lyttelton Times* article mentioned above:—

"He (Mr. Matthews) says the small flocks of Godwits arrive at Kaitaia early in September, and in December they are represented by many thousands. They leave on their outward bound voyages during March and April. According to the Maoris most of the flocks take their departure from Muri Motu, near the North Cape. This, apparently, gave rise to a belief held by many naturalists until last year that the Godwits, when they decided to start out over the ocean, gathered together in countless numbers from all parts of New Zealand at Spirits Bay, close to the North Cape, the same place from which, according to Maori legends, the spirits of the dead took their departure to the other world, below the ocean. There is no doubt that Spirits Bay is one of the places of departure. But Godwits also depart from other places in the far north of New Zealand. An old Moari once told Mr. Mathews that he saw a large flock of Godwits taking their departure from Rangaunu, a large bay on the east coast of the northern part of the Auckland province. The flock wheeled and circled, rising higher and higher in the air, until it was nearly out of sight. The members then formed up and darted away in a north-westerly direction. Mr. E. Matthews, who lives at Awanui, at the end of the bay, informed Mr. R. H. Matthews that on one occasion at the end of March, about thirty years ago, while he was riding along the beach towards Waikarikari, west of Puheke, at mid-day, he noticed an unusual appearance. It was a dark patch above high-water mark, and it extended up the slopes of the front line of sand dunes. When he got within easy gun range he saw that it was an immense flock of Godwits, all fast asleep, with the exception of a few which apparently acted as sentinels. Rangaunu harbour, with its wide expanse of sand and mud banks, and its numerous creeks, intersecting and extending far up the extensive mangrove flats, is an ideal feeding and fattening ground. The Godwits pass up and down the harbour with remarkable

\* This Godwit has been observed in favourable localities throughout Australia and Tasmania and as far south as Campbell Island.—EDS.

regularity. Soon after ebb-tide they repair to favourite feeding-grounds up the harbour and scatter over the flats covered with karepo, or zosteria, where various crustacea abound, and up the creeks. As the tide flows and covers the low-lying flats, small flocks, numbering from 200 to 500, which the Maoris call 'waka kuaka,' are seen streaming down the harbour. Later on, the main flock, many thousands strong, in close cuneate formation, head for the Kotiata bank and settle on it. Formerly they went to Otamatea, near the entrance of the harbour, till the rising tide forced them to fly to a 'puta' on the Otiaia beach. The word 'puta' means a hole, but it is now applied to various favourite haunts and resting places, where the Godwits regularly collect at certain states of the tide, and, owing to natural or artificial cover, enable a sportsman to approach within gun range. The word is also applied to localities inland or at the back of sand dunes where the Godwits seek shelter during heavy gales. In the old days a 'puta' that had just been discovered was regarded as the property of the finder. Trespass was followed by severe punishment and sometimes by bloodshed.

"Mr. Matthews states that the Godwit was strictly protected in that part of New Zealand by the old-time Maori, but after the death of Popata, about forty-five years ago, the conditions were relaxed, and have not been enforced. The season for taking the Godwit opened after the shark-fishing was over, generally about the time of the full moon in February, high spring tides being necessary for making big bags, especially after the introduction of guns. The birds are always very fat after a wet summer. It is a Maori tradition that they fatten on 'kohu.' Sometimes the flock would be surrounded by men carrying 'rama,' or torches. At the same time swift runners with nets and clubs would rush into the midst of the dazed and confused flock, and many would be killed. The 'tahuhu' was a long rope a little thicker than a lead pencil, lightly tanned to make it less conspicuous. It was tightly stretched about one foot from the ground and secured to stout pegs driven in at intervals to keep it at the required height, an important item. To this rope nooses, numbering 600 to 800 or more, were tied close together, overlapping slightly. Sometimes two rows of nooses, one above the other, were tied so that the loop of the upper passed half-way down across the lower. The running part of the lower noose was slightly tied to the standing part of the upper to keep the loop open, but so as to be readily detached when a bird was caught. Another method for a permanent 'tahuhu' was used. A number of long, stout poles were erected in the regular track of flight. To these from twelve to fifteen or more ropes were fastened about a foot apart. To these ropes the nooses, made of tanned flax fibre, were tied. Sometimes a more simple method was adopted. A large number of pegs were driven in all about and around the resting

places regularly visited by the birds. To each peg was tied a noose made of a narrow strip of green flax leaf. Many birds were captured by these methods, and the old-time Maori was kept well supplied with this delicacy.

"Mr Matthews confirms the statements of other correspondents that some of the Godwits miss the annual migration. He says that small flocks may be seen on the beaches all through the winter. The Maoris gave Godwits the general name of 'kuaka,' which is commonly used by Europeans in the Auckland province; but they divided them into varieties, according to the difference in the plumage. There were the 'kura,' with a red breast; the 'karoro,' grey, with a lighter or mottled breast; and the 'ra-kakao,' or 'kakao,' a darker grey, smaller size, and usually in very poor condition. It is somewhat strange, Mr. Matthews adds, that after the birds settle on a beach the 'kakao' occupy positions on the outside and flanks of the main flock."

### Reviews.

["The Home Life of the Golden Eagle." Photographed and described by H. B. Macpherson. Witherby and Co. Crown 4to, pp. 45 and 32 plates. 5s. net.]

IT is difficult to give too much praise to the perseverance shown by Mr. H. B. Macpherson, as portrayed in his most interesting work, "The Home Life of the Golden Eagle," and not only are the different phases of the home life of this noble bird faithfully portrayed in exquisite photographs, but much information gained that could not have been learnt in any other way, and it must have given the author much pleasure watching these shy birds at such close quarters, and quite made up for the cold waiting in damp, cramped quarters.

The way the parent birds pluck their prey and divide it before giving it to their young is very interesting. It must have been a keen disappointment to have missed seeing what became of the other young one, as it is still a much debated point how some of the young disappear. The reproductions of the photographs could not be improved upon, and are certainly an object lesson as to how this work can be done, and we strongly recommend this work to our readers, especially as the Golden Eagle is a prototype of the Wedge-tailed Eagle or Eagle-Hawk (*Uroaëtus audax*) of Australia.—D. LE S.

[Egyptian Birds. Painted and Described. By Charles Whymper. Adam and Charles Black, London. 20s. net.]

THE author of this handsome and interesting volume of bird lore is well and favourably known as an ornithological artist, and his reputation will not suffer by the present production. "Egyptian Birds," although it has no claim to scientific notice, should serve as a useful guide to bird-lovers who are fortunate

enough to visit the Nile Valley. There are 51 coloured plates, and brief popular descriptions of no fewer than 356 species of birds. The plates are excellently reproduced, though the colours in some instances are displeasing. They form a charming portrait gallery of Egypt's avifauna. Perhaps the most artistic are those depicting the Black-and-White Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), Kites in flight, and Buff-back Herons (*Ardeola russofa*). All the illustrations are from original water-colour drawings. Mr. Whymper, during his visits to Egypt, was given special facilities for obtaining information and carrying out his pleasant task of portraying the bird life of the country. The results he has obtained are deserving of all praise.

But if Mr. Whymper is an accomplished artist he has not the gift of writing to an equal degree. There is no magic in his descriptions of the beautiful creatures which his brush has so finely portrayed. Perhaps he did not seek after the style which makes the essays of Burroughs and Hudson so delightful to read. As he says, he wrote the book to aid visitors to the land of the Pharaohs to identify the birds seen, and in this purpose he has succeeded admirably. Here is a sample of the text, picked at random :—

"We will spare the reader a detailed *menu* of this omnivorous bird (the Kite), but all who visit Egypt ought to bless it, as, until some enlightened system of sanitation is adopted, this bird, almost unaided, makes the land possible to live in, or to be visited with any safety or pleasure. If it were exterminated, as the Kites have been in Great Britain, it is almost impossible to exaggerate what would be the dire results to the health of the newcomers to this old Eastern country. Mercifully there seems no sort of chance of its numbers decreasing. Indeed, in 1908 I saw, behind the New Winter Palace Hotel at Luxor, a flock which certainly ran into hundreds; two dead donkeys, thrown out behind the walls of the hotel grounds, were the cause of this vast congregation."

The author states that the birds in Egypt are very tame and admit of close inspection. He does not know why this should be so, as the land "teems with foxes, jackals, Kites, Vultures, Eagles, Falcons, and Hawks without end, all with an eye to business." And there are hosts of "demon boys" to harry the wild things.

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### Correspondence.

#### PROTECTION AND PRIORITY.

*To the Editors of "The Emu."*

DEAR SIRs,—Would you kindly inform me if any steps have been taken, or are contemplated, to check the exportation of protected birds from New South Wales and Queensland. I have means of knowing that large numbers of a variety of species are shipped from different ports of the above States