

## Bird Observers' Club.

At the October meeting of the B.O.C., Mr. Edwin Ashby, M.B.O.U., of South Australia, gave an account of his recent collecting trips in South Australia and Tasmania. He first told of the bird-life found in a narrow strip of country about 5 miles wide and 40 miles long at Port Germein, South Australia. One side of this strip is bordered by the sea and the other by a mountain range, and in it were associated *Malurus callainus*, *M. cyanotus*, *Megalurus gramineus*, and other interesting forms. Mr. Ashby considered that the first-named species was now almost extinct. He made his remarks most interesting by handing round specimen skins of the birds under discussion. Many fine skins secured from Tasmania a few days before the meeting were also shown, and they included rare species such as *Acanthornis magna*, *Acanthiza ewingi*, *Melithreptus validirostris*, and *M. melanocephalus*. Mr. Ashby dwelt at length on the plumage phases of the birds he exhibited. The hon. secretary (Mr. F. E. Wilson) exhibited a number of Victorian skins of the same species as those collected by Mr. Ashby, and some interesting comparisons were made.

The November meeting of the Club was held at the residence of the hon. secretary, Mr. F. E. Wilson. Mr. Wilson read an interesting paper on his ornithological trip to Winiam, in the Nhill district. He showed specimens of a new *Acanthiza* which he discovered in the district, and which he proposed to name *Acanthiza winiamida*. About 85 species of birds were met with, including some of the Mallee forms, such as *Drymodes brunncopygius*, *Hylacola cauta*, *Pachycephala gilberti*, and *Acanthiza pyrrhopygia*. Mr. Wilson illustrated his paper in an interesting manner with a collection of birds, nests, eggs, plants, and other forms of life met with in the district. The president, Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, C.M.Z.S., welcomed to the meeting Mr. Berney, of Queensland, and spoke of the excellent work Mr. Berney was doing in preparing an index to *The Emu*. Mr. Berney, in response, spoke of his recent trip to England, and of the notable ornithologists he had met there. He showed a number of photographs of the Bustard (*Otis tarda*) displaying its magnificent plumage. From the remarks of Mr. F. E. Howe, there are still some rare birds to be found breeding near Melbourne. Mr. Howe referred to a gully near Ferntree Gully, where he met with the Red-browed Tree-creeper, Rose-breasted Robin, Rufous Fantail, Lewin's Honey-cater, Olive Thickethead, Satin Flycatcher, Black-faced Flycatcher, and Pilot-Bird.

## Correspondence.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—Referring to Dr. Shufeldt's interesting and instructive paper on "Fossil Birds' Eggs" in the last number of *The Emu*, I would be glad to make a few comments on it.

He states the difficulty there is in the contents of the egg becoming fossilized. That is quite true, unless the contents had dried or hardened in the first instance. The few eggs that have been found are probably those of ground-laying birds, whose eggs were probably swept away in a flood and deeply buried in mud.

Then, again, they may be those of mound-building birds, and this class of bird may have been far more numerous than they are now. I have found eggs of these birds that had been 3 or 4 feet down in an old mound for many years, and were perfect, although fragile, and the interior always filled with soil that had worked in through some crack.

Then, again, take birds that nest in burrows, such as Petrels and others. On several occasions I have found buried eggs of Mutton-Birds (*Puffinus brevicaudus*) that had been originally laid in a burrow possibly 2 to 3 feet deep; the parent had been killed and the egg left. In time the hole fell in and the egg was covered, and, as the ground above may possibly be raised by sand drifts and other means, the egg was quite protected from the weather. Only last year I examined a cliff of hardened sand which had been eroded by the wind, and about 8 feet from the surface saw half an egg projecting from the bank. The erosion was taking place across an old Mutton-Bird nesting-ground, which probably had not been used for over one hundred years. On removing the egg I found it full of sand, and the surface slightly cracked. If this mound had eventually been formed into dune sandstone instead of being eroded away, this egg would have become fossilized also, and the shell would have been almost perfect. I have found three eggs of these birds in similar circumstances, and all full of sand, which would agree with Dr. Shufeldt's contention.

Although we have found fossil remains of animals in dune sandstone, no signs of eggs have been noticed, but they may easily be overlooked. Of course, this rock is of recent origin, but the same principle would apply.

W. H. D. LE SOUËF.

Zoological Gardens, Melbourne.

*To the Editors of "The Emu."*

SIRS, — The Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Advisory Council of Science and Industry has had brought before it the possibility that the completion of the Trans-continental Railway may lead to the introduction of European Sparrows into Western Australia, in which State they are at present unknown.

The Committee are endeavouring to ascertain whether Sparrows have followed the construction of the line from the Port Augusta end, and if so, to what distance; and it has occurred to them that some reader of *The Emu* may have travelled on the line and made observations on the birds seen, which would enable him to answer these questions. If so, I should be much obliged if he would communicate with me as soon as possible.—Yours faithfully,

GERALD LIGHTFOOT,

Acting Secretary, Executive Committee, Advisory  
Council of Science and Industry.

314 Albert-street, East Melbourne, 14/11/16.