

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—The "Note on the Finding of the Nest and Eggs of the Desert Chat (*Ashbyia lovensis*)," by Edgar R. Waite, F.L.S., Director of the South Australian Museum, which appeared on pp. 167 and 168 of the January issue of *The Emu*, was sent to me by Mr. Waite, and was forwarded by me to the editor as received.—Yours, &c.,

S. A. WHITE.

Wetunga, Adelaide, 12th March, 1917.

Eggs of *Garzetta nigripes*: a Correction.—In my article upon the eggs of *Garzetta nigripes* in last issue of *The Emu* (vol. xvi., p. 162), I wish to correct a possible mistake. My reference to the non-description of the bird's head plumes was meant to apply to the taking of the eggs rather than to the bird itself. Dr. Leach and Messrs. Hall, Lucas, and Le Souëf all have noted one or more head plumes during the breeding season, though collectors taking reputed clutches did not mention the plumes. In another part of the same article the average dimensions of eggs is given as 1.73 x 1.24 inches; this should read 1.69 x 1.23 inches.—H. L. WHITE. Belltrees, 4/2/17.

About Members.

MEMBERS of the R.A.O.U. will be pleased to learn that at the thirty-fourth stated meeting of the American Ornithologists, Union, held in Philadelphia, Pa., 13th to 16th November, our fellow-member, Mr. Robert Hall, C.M.B.O.U., C.M.Z.S., was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union. We congratulate Mr. Hall, who is a member of the R.A.O.U. Check-list Committee, on the honour conferred on him.

Obituary.

RAMSAY.—December 16, 1916, at his residence, Truro, Queensborough-road, Croydon Park, Edward Pearson Ramsay, LL.D., F.R.S.E., &c., third son of the late David Ramsay, M.D., aged 74 years.

ALL ornithologists—the older ones, at all events, to whom the late doctor was better known—will desire to pay tribute to the memory of Edward Pearson Ramsay.

On the 18th December his remains were laid to rest in the old-fashioned, vine-covered, stone vault with iron railings built by his father, the late David Ramsay, M.D., an early Australian settler, in the little private cemetery adjoining St. David's Presbyterian Church, Haberfield. The son inherited his love of Nature from his father, whose collections of birds, insects, &c., are preserved in the Perth Museum, Scotland. It was fitting, too, that Edward was buried near the old family Dobroyde estate, Ashfield, where he obtained so much first field knowledge, and

used to watch particular birds' nests containing various Cuckoo eggs to see what species the strange egg would hatch out.

Amongst the mourners were Mr. J. H. Maiden, I.S.O., Director of the Botanic Gardens, Sydney; Mr. Chas. Hedley, F.L.S., representing the Australian Museum, of which the deceased was erstwhile Curator; there were also representatives present from the Technological Museum, the Royal Society of New South Wales, Australian Historical Society, and many notable persons.

The late Dr. E. P. Ramsay was born at Dobroyde House 74 years ago. He was educated at St. Mark's School, Macquarie Fields, and afterwards at Darling Point, under the Rev. G. S. Macarthur. Later he entered the Sydney University. For a time Dr. Ramsay was engaged in managing the Dobroyde Nursery, on the estate of his father, but he and his brothers finally entered upon a scheme of sugar-growing in Queensland, in which undertaking they were successful.

When Dr. Pittard was the Curator of the Australian Museum in Sydney, Dr. Ramsay travelled in New South Wales and Queensland, notably the Cardwell district, October, 1873, in search of specimens suitable for the Museum. In 1874 the curatorship of the Museum was vacant, and Dr. Ramsay was appointed to the position, a post he filled with much success until 1895, when he was compelled to retire through ill-health. His retirement was a great disappointment to his friends. As Baron von Mueller was great amongst botanists, it was thought that Ramsay would become a "Mueller" amongst ornithologists. However, Dr. Ramsay retained until his death the appointment of consulting ornithologist to the Museum, and during that time wrote many manuscripts pertaining to ornithology, which it is hoped the trustees of the institution may soon publish. There is no more popular nature study in Australia than its birds.

While natural history was the chief branch of his scientific research, Dr. Ramsay took a keen interest in the advancement of science generally. His early love for botany found expression in the Dobroyde new plant nursery, through which a large number of plants were first introduced to Australia. Bird and animal life also largely claimed his attention, and he worked in collaboration with the late Sir Richard Owen (England) on the extinct animals of Australia, among which were discovered the giant kangaroo and marsupial "lion." Dr. Ramsay was requested by John Gould to guard his Australian interests in his famous folio work, "Birds of Australia."

In the work of furthering the advancement of science in Australia, Dr. Ramsay was, together with Sir William Macleay, one of the founders of the Linnean Society. When a lad he was also the treasurer of the old Philosophical Society, which finally merged into the Royal Society of to-day. As a reward for his labours in this direction Dr. Ramsay was created a life member of the Royal Society. Dr. Ramsay was closely associated with scientific societies in Great Britain. He was a Fellow of the

Geological Society of England, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of England, and a member of the Royal Irish Academy.

In 1883 he was appointed Commissioner for New South Wales and Tasmania at the great International Fisheries Exhibition held in London, and while he was there the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. At that time he was also created a life member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Italian Government made him a Knight of the Crown of Italy.

Dr. Ramsay published in 1888 a "Tabular List of the Birds of Australia" (an amended edition of his 1877 "List"), which was extremely useful, and was followed by the field workers of those days. Another important ornithological work was the "Catalogue of the Australian Birds in the Australian Museum, Sydney." Parts 1 and 2—Accipitres and Striges—were respectively issued 1874-8, and subsequent additions; part 3—Psittaci—was issued 1891; and part 4—Picariæ (Kingfishers)—in 1894.

Amongst the most remarkable Australian birds first described by Dr. Ramsay were *Atrichornis rufescens* (Rufous Scrub-Bird), *Heteromyias cinereifrons* (Ashy-fronted Robin), *Orthonyx spaldingi* (Black-headed Log-runner), *Colluricincla boweri* (Bower Shrike-Thrush), *Eopsaltria* (now *Pachycephala*) *inornata* (Grey Thick-head), *Ptilotis macleayana* (Yellow-streaked Honey-eater), *Ptilotis frenata* (Bridled Honey-eater), *Scenopætes denti-rostris* (Tooth-billed Bower-Bird), and *Ailurædus maculosus* (Spotted Cat-Bird); and he described many new eggs.

In private life the deceased ornithologist was of a genial disposition. He was a great lover of music, and had a keen sense of humour. So has passed one of the most conspicuous of Australian-born workers among the *ornis* of his country.

Bird Observers' Club.

THE December meeting of the B.O.C. was held at the residence of Dr. Norman M'Arthur, Toorak. Mr. Barnard, of Queensland, was welcomed as a visitor, and read a short but valuable paper on "Bird Life as Affected by Drought." He stated that some birds were practically exterminated, whilst others usually worked towards the coast. Sometimes years elapsed before they returned to their locality again. He instanced such birds as the Orange-backed Wren-Warbler (*Malurus melanocephalus*) and the Beautiful Parrakeet (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*), which he had only seen once since 1882, when a big drought occurred. Mr. Tom. Tregellas read a paper describing in detail a collecting trip taken in October, 1916, to Linga, in the Mallee country. He illustrated his remarks with an excellent series of lantern slides, showing the plant and bird life of the district. A notable picture was the nest and egg of the Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*). Mr. Howat was provisionally elected a member of the Club.