

not the smallest honey-eater according to the measurements given by him, the species of *Myzomela* and "*Ramsayornis*" being smaller.

The birds formerly called *Ptilotis* with which this volume concludes are divided by Mr. Mathews into twelve genera, one of which, *Dorothina*, contains six species, another three species, four others two species and the other six one species each. Space will not allow of our discussing these in detail. We do not understand why the vernacular Yellow-fronted Honey-eater is used for *Pt. analoga*, in place of the usual name Yellow-spotted Honey-eater, since there is no yellow on the forehead of this bird. Possibly this is a misprint since the figure has the usual name, but it is repeated in the heading of the next page.

In this review we have chiefly noted changes in classification or in nomenclature and commented on certain views expressed by the author which seem to us open to question, but these are only minor matters. Mr. Mathews has provided us with a complete synonymy, full references and accurate descriptions of each species and has collated published information about each with notes supplied him by most of the leading field workers in Australia. For all this valuable labour Australian ornithologists are enormously indebted to him, and by indicating the gaps in our knowledge and discussing all doubtful points he should stimulate us to collect further facts to fill up these gaps and settle doubts.—W.B.A.

---

## Correspondence.

### IS THE SHAPE OF AN EGG AN INDICATION OF THE SEX OF THE CHICK?

On page 234 of the *Emu*, Vol. XXIV., the following note by Mr. H. Wolstenholme appears on the nest and eggs of the Brolga, *Megalornis rubicunda* :—

"The two eggs were decidedly different in shape, one being fairly round and the other somewhat elongated. The boy who brought the information as to the nest and acted as guide was anxious to know whether one would produce a male and the other a female, and if so, which was which. None of the learned ornithologists present could answer this simple question."

I would like to do my little bit towards answering this simple question. My observations, after many years as a collector, lead me to the conclusion that birds that lay two eggs to a clutch invariably lay one elongated and the other fairly round, and with this strange phenomenon always at hand I decided on the following experiment.

From a friend who kept poultry I carefully selected thirteen Leghorn's eggs of the "fairly round" shape already mentioned, with the result that I secured twelve pullets and one cockerel. After reading the above article in the *Emu*, I spoke of my experience

---

to Mr. A. J. Campbell, and he informed me that he had tried the same experiment with the elongated eggs and produced all cockerels.

16 Moorhouse St.,  
East Camberwell,  
Melbourne.

E. W. BUNN, R.A.O.U.  
4th April, 1925.

#### WHAT IS THE FOOD OF THE AUSTRALIAN DARTER ?

On Oct. 22, 1919, while collecting for the U.S. National Museum on the Macdonald River, New England, N.S. Wales, I shot a Darter (*Anhinga novæhollandiæ*). I little suspected this bird of being a vegetarian, nevertheless its crop, with the exception of one small shrimp, was crammed full of short sections of assorted river weeds. This confirms Mr. J. A. Hill's observation published in the *Emu*, Vol. XXIV., p. 165. At the same place I shot a red-bellied black snake, which was basking in the sun on a half-submerged granite rock. Its stomach contained three fresh-water blackfish (*Gadopsis marmoratus*) measuring from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 inches in length. I mention this to show that fish were available to the bird.

La Mascotte,  
Doncaster Avenue,  
Kensington, Sydney.

HARRY BURRELL, C.M.Z.S.  
March 8th, 1925.

I have frequently watched Australian Darters fishing in our lagoon, and have repeatedly seen them come up with fish in their bill, holding the fish crosswise. After swimming round for a little they give their head a toss and throw the fish into the air, catching it as it comes down head first in proper order for swallowing. When they catch an extra large fish (about 6 in.  $\times$  3 in.) they seem to think it unsafe to toss it while in the water and swim ashore with it. Even from a distance of one hundred yards one can watch the course of the fish down the long, snake-like neck by the large swelling gradually descending towards the body.

Coomooboolaroo,  
Duaringa, Queensland.

C. A. BARNARD,  
March 22nd, 1925.

Whilst the observations of Messrs. Hill and Burrell suggest that the Darter sometimes varies its diet, there can be little doubt that it is in the main a fish-eating bird. Mr. Barnard's observations confirm those made by Mr. F. L. Berney in the Richmond district, North Queensland, published in the *Emu*, Vol. VI., p. 155. All the standard works on Australian birds state that the Darter lives principally on fish (Gould's Handbook, Vol. 2, p. 496; Campbell's Nests and Eggs, p. 980; North's Nests and Eggs, Vol. 3, p. 336). The Indian, African, and American Darters are likewise credited with living principally on fish (Jerdon's Birds of India, Vol. 2, p. 865; Legge's Birds of Ceylon, p. 1194; Stark and Sclater's Birds of South Africa, Vol. 4, p. 14; Bent's Life Histories of N. American Petrels and Pelicans and their Allies, p. 234.)

Under the title Snake-bird in Newton's Dictionary of Birds we read: "Its speed and skill under water are almost beyond exaggeration, and it exhibits these qualities even in captivity, taking—apparently without effort—fish after fish that may be introduced into its tank, however rapidly they may swim and twist." In this note Prof. Newton was no doubt referring to the Diving Birds' House in the London Zoological Gardens, where the sight of the Darter pursuing and capturing the live fish placed in its tank at feeding time has for years been witnessed daily by hundreds of people. These spectators would take a lot of convincing that a Darter is naturally a vegetarian.—EDITOR.

### Stray Feathers.

**The Devonport Crested Penguin.**—There has been some discussion among Australasian ornithologists as to which species to refer the Penguin which came ashore near Devonport, Tas., in 1913. In a paper contributed to the *Ibis*, Jan., 1915, I referred the specimen to *Catarrhactes chrysocome*, Forst., but the white throat and very small amount of yellow crest indicated that maturity had not been reached. Since then Mathews and Iredale, in "A Manual of the Birds of Australia," Vol. I., p. 12, have referred the Devonport specimen to *Eudyptes schlegeli*, Finsch and have queried it as "Adult"; in the *Ibis* paper I stated that "he evidently had another moult to undergo before reaching maturity."

In Feb., 1910, Dr. Brooke Nicholls kept for some time in captivity a Crested Penguin which came ashore at Lorne, Vic., where he was holidaying at the time; the bird was quite tame, but sulked in a bathing-box for the first fortnight, during which it underwent a complete moult, "his new crest being of a bright sulphur-yellow." Dr. Nicholls' photo taken after the moult, indicates a long crest, and a very black throat sharply defined from the white of chest below; this photo may be seen in the admirable little "School Paper" (Melb., Oct., 1910), and was reproduced by A. F. Bassett Hull in "Records of the Australian Museum," Vol. XII., No. 6, with the Devonport specimen figured in the same plate. There is no doubt that the Lorne bird was *C. chrysocome*, Forst.

The dusky hue showing through the white-tipped feathers of extreme upper-throat in the Devonport specimen, for about one inch and a quarter below base of bill, seems to indicate that the throat would eventually have become black had the bird lived to attain maturity.

In one of his interesting letters to me, Mr. R. Stuart Sutherland of N.Z. remarked: "I consider your specimen *chrysocome*, but of course would require to see it before being positive. . . . A point worthy of notice in *schlegeli* is the larger bill:—

<i>pachyrhynchus</i>	2.1 ins. to 2.90 ins.
<i>chrysocome</i>	2.0 ins. to 2.75 ins.
<i>schlegeli</i>	2.7 ins. to 3.10 ins."