

Report of Bird Observers' Club, Melbourne

The aviaries of Dr. Clendinnen, which were visited on September 20, proved to be full of interest. Very many Australian birds, chiefly of the Parrot, Finch, and Honeyeater families, were seen under healthy and happy conditions. A thoroughly up-to-date bird room, where the temperature can be controlled, houses the rarer species. Scientific air-culture is a new branch of bird lore and should take its part as a corollary or co-efficient in the study of Australian birds.

The October outing was among a profusion of wild flowers in the upland scenery of Emerald. Golden Whistlers and other common birds were seen and heard, while Cuckoos of several species were most in evidence in point of numbers. Discussion arose about the musical qualities of the Bell Miner, which, it is interesting to note, is increasing in numbers, someone remarking on the monotony of the single call notes. In the bush setting the poet's thoughts were recalled.

"By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling;
And softer than slumber and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing."

On the afternoon of October 11 a hurried visit was paid to Mt. Dandenong to see the last of the Lyrebird season. A nest in one of the picnic reserves contained a deserted egg, this probably having been interfered with, because the hen was sitting well earlier in the month. It may be that this is the last evidence of these fine birds at this spot, and illustrates the danger of extinction from contact with vermin and gun fiends. The discovery of the Flame Robin nesting has established a point of great interest to bird observers. This is the kind that regularly comes about the open country in winter time, and may even be seen sitting on the suburban clothes lines. But the question is, "Where do the Robins go in summer?" The site of this nest was a few feet from the ground in the scar of a damaged tree. The female continued to sit, and everyone was enabled to see her and also her three speckled eggs when later she was flushed. A nest of the Pilot-bird was found, and a pair of Olive Whistlers seen. We also saw the arrival of a pair of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, but other migrants not yet here are the Brush Cuckoo and the Rufous Fantail. On the tarred and graded roads, for which the ranges are now famous, an enjoyable return was made to the railside. While on every side was evidence of the hand of man in the fire-scourged landscapes, where once was a magnificent State forest, there is yet much to admire where the homes, with instincts for culture, are gaily decked in the brightest of exotic flowers and foliage.

The evening meeting on October 23 was a wonderful record of the Lyrebird with the lantern slides by Mr. Tom Tregellas. It may be claimed that nowhere in the world has such a series been shown of the male bird in display, and the photographer deserves the greatest credit for his work. In November, by invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Hanks, the outing was made to their week-end block at Wandin. Here in a woodland glade, redolent with the fragrance of black wattle in bloom, it was pleasant to see very many native birds finding sanctuary from the surrounding clearings. Nests were seen of the following birds, but some were in inaccessible places:—Dusky Wood-Swallow, Yellow Robin, Spotted Pardalote, Blue Wren, Brown Thornbill, Brown Flycatcher, Olive-backed Oriole, Red-browed Finch, Sittella, Golden Whistler, Orange-winged Sittella, and White-naped Honeyeater. A Wedge-tailed Eagle circling in the blue gave a fine Australian touch to the summer's day.

On November 15 we visited the farm of Mr. Alan Jaques, Balwyn, where several species of pheasants and other game birds are grown on a commercial scale.

On November 25 by invitation, members attended the lecture of Sir James Barrett on "The National Parks of America." It is to be hoped that some day, not very far distant, Australia, a new but sparsely populated land, will have national preserves of similar extent to her credit. The Committee of the Bird Observers' Club wishes to extend to all bird lovers in the vicinity of Melbourne, whether members of the Union or not, a cordial invitation to come along to meetings, which are held regularly in the R.A.O.U. rooms on the fourth Tuesday evening each month. The Leach Memorial Club continues to carry through a plan of outings as a section of the Bird Club's activities.—A.G.C.

Correspondence

To the Editor.

Sir,—The questions of who should be permitted to collect natural history specimens and who should be considered a "scientific" collector have for very many years been vexed ones. No proper attempt has been made to settle this question, hence contentions are continually re-occurring, causing much perturbation amongst those concerned, and which should be removed in the best interests of scientific advancement.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to set a recognised standard, by which the classification of what constitutes scientific collecting may be made. If such a standard were made, and agreed upon by the proper authorities, it would set at rest many causes of dispute with, and even interference with, legitimate collectors, who are working in the interests of the advancement of the sciences. As a working basis for consideration, I would suggest that a scientific collector is a person who collects for "recognised" or registered public and private museums, herbariums and laboratories. Expression of opinion should be invited from the leading scientists of the Commonwealth and others by the Council of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union.—Yours, etc.,

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South Camberwell, 12/11/30.

Pressure on space has necessitated the holding over of several contributions, including two papers read at the Congress.

The date of publication was January 2, 1931.