

will be utilized by the publication of Supplements to the *Checklist*.—H. M. WHITTELL, Secretary and Convener.

SUPPLEMENT NO. 1

No. 97.—*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Brandt

Phalacrocorax ater (Lesson), Little Black Cormorant, becomes *P. sulcirostris* Brandt (Bull. Sci. Ac. Imp. Petersb., III, 1837, p. 56) as the name *Carbo ater* Lesson has been shown to apply to a young bird of *P. magellanicus* (Gmelin), and was probably taken on the Falkland Islands. Authority: Berlioz, Bull. Mus. Paris, XXXIII, 1927, p. 350.

No. 289.—*Platycercus icterotis* Kuhl

The following subspecies of *Platycercus icterotis* Kuhl, Western Rosella, are recognized:—

P. i. icterotis Kuhl.

Synonyms: *stanleyi* Vigors, *salvadori* Mathews.

Range: South-west Australia (coastal).

P. i. xanthogenys Salvadori.

Synonym: *whitlocki* Mathews.

Range: South-west Australia (drier areas).

References: Jenkins, *Emu* xxx, 1930, p. 29, and Whitlock, *Emu* xxxvii, 1937, p. 108.

No. 298. *Psephotus narethae* is suppressed as a full species and is recognized as a subspecies of no. 297 *P. haematogaster*, Blue-bonnet, with range the Nullarbor Plains.

Contributors to the *Emu* are requested to use the nomenclature of the *Checklist*, as modified by the Supplements published from time to time.

Stray Feathers

Mating in Petrels.—In the useful paper by David Lack, "Pair-Formation in Birds," *The Condor*, vol. XLII, 1940, pp. 269-286, reviewed in the last issue of *The Emu*, two species of petrels are placed in the category of birds which pair for life. Lack states: "Manx Shearwaters (*Puffinus puffinus*) and Wilson Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*) have re-mated in a second year, but there is no evidence as to whether these birds remain paired outside the breeding season. It is evident that far more data are needed on this subject." By the very nature of things it is unlikely that positive evidence on this group can be early forthcoming,

except by sheer luck—evidence such as the recovery, in some way, of a banded pair in the seas where they are wintering. We have to depend, therefore, on the weight of indirect evidence to decide the question whether petrels form permanent unions. My evidence, so far as it goes, would not oppose such a view. On May 29, 1926, following a violent storm, I searched Cottesloe Beach, Western Australia, for derelict petrels and picked up two Wilson Storm-Petrels which were lying a yard or two from each other—the one and only instance when this species has been found on Western Australian beaches. They were a male and female, and, if a mated pair, it must be held as a coincidence not only that they were overwhelmed by the storm simultaneously, but that they had drifted ashore together. Probably they perished near the spot where they were found. It has been my experience to observe Storm-Petrels (both Wilson's and the White-faced, *Pelagodroma marina*) in pairs at sea. Where petrels flock together in great aggregations in the non-breeding season the difficulty of proving the existence of mated pairs increases. The period October-November, 1938, was a catastrophic one for petrels moving down the New South Wales coast and large numbers were cast up dead on the beaches. It was a particularly bad year for the migrating Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*), of which I counted 88 along the 4½ miles of beach of Bate Bay, Cronulla, on November 6. Because the species was believed by local ornithologists to be a rare one I paid some attention to these birds and among investigations I made was the determination of the sex of a fair sample—13 were males and 15 females, virtually a 50-50 sex-ratio. This observation is not inconsistent with the hypothesis that the components of the flock were mated pairs, though of course it is no proof. All the birds had the gonads in an advanced stage of development. Among the data not included by Lack in his survey were the banding experiments of F. Lewis on the Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) during 1920-23 (*The Emu*, vol. XXIV, 1924, p. 86). He found that a proportion of the marked birds which returned were pairs which came back to the same burrow, one pair doing so for two consecutive years. A strong homing instinct was demonstrated by this experiment and so data of this kind may be interpreted not that petrels tend to form permanent attachments but that each member of a pair has an urge to return to the same burrow and thus become re-united to its mate after a season's wandering. Stronger support for the theory would be the finding of a banded pair in a burrow other than that in which they were originally marked.—D. L. SERVENTY, Sydney, 8/5/41.

Bird Mimicry.—Thornbill and Others.—In *The Emu*, vol. XL, page 248, Mr. J. Waterhouse has an interesting note on the vocal mimicry of the Brown Thornbill, and, on page 328, Mr. H. Thorogood also has very interesting notes on the Black-backed Magpie and other bird mimics. I was particularly interested in those records as I have had similar experiences to those of the two writers, but with the Yellow-tailed Thornbill and Black-backed Magpie.

On September 26, 1940, I discovered that the Yellow-tailed Thornbill is a very capable mimic. In a clump of red bottle-brush, a bird was feeding and occasionally resting. The bird sang its own song in a subdued tone, then ran on to the warning call of the Noisy Miner and the calls of the Speckled Warbler and the White-throated Warbler. These calls were repeated many times and were perfectly rendered. On May 3, 1939, I heard a very fine performance by a Black-backed Magpie. The bird was resting on a dead tree near where I was working, and, in a quiet warble, it ran from its own call notes to those of the Grey Butcher-bird, Grey Thrush and the Olive-backed Oriole. There were also several twittering calls resembling the calls of small birds, but these were given in such a subdued note that I could not say to which birds the calls belonged.

Although Magpies are numerous and tame, and, like Mr. Thorogood's birds, are always in attendance when the plough is in use, I have never before, nor since, heard any attempt at mimicry from this species. As the Magpie is so apt at learning all manner of things when in captivity, one is naturally surprised that mimicry is not more generally used by the species. I have an ever-growing list of bird mimics in my district, but to my thinking the Pied Butcher-bird is the master mimic. Mimicry is a common habit with this species and I have recorded the call notes of twenty-five species of birds, all perfectly rendered by them. In some cases several different call notes of a particular species are given. The mimicry of the Pied Butcher-bird is given in a whisper song when the bird is resting. They prefer a windy day for their performance, when they perch in some suitable place, usually not far above the ground. The imitative capacity of the Pied Butcher-bird is remarkable, as they run from one bird call to another with not the slightest error, but often mingling their own varied calls with those of the birds imitated.

Of the thirteen species of birds that are known to me as mimics, all except the White-plumed Honeyeater give their recitals in a subdued tone, apparently for their own entertainment, as they are usually alone when performing.

I have not heard the White-plumed Honeyeater attempt mimicry in my own district, but I heard several birds doing so on the Dawson in May of last year. Two calls other than their own were heard, being the calls of the Crested Hawk and the Golden Whistler. The calls were given clearly and in their natural tone while the birds were feeding and playing in company with others of their species.—E. A. R. LORD, Murphy's Creek, Qld., 12/6/41.

Wyperfeld National Park.—I give some notes of four days spent at Wyperfeld during Easter (April 19 to 22) of this year. Although we were told at Rainbow that the season was regarded as a good one, with intermittent light rains, and although there was water in most of the farm dams, the Park itself looked terribly desolate until the red gum flats were reached. These were thinly covered with weeds which gave them a fresh appearance, but there was no grass on the flats and only very light shoots of it in isolated spots among some of the timber. Compared with my previous visit in the spring of 1933, the whole place looked very arid, an effect which was increased by the fact that nearly all the tea-tree appeared to have died at the top, although most of it was shooting vigorously from the base.

Lack of food apparently accounted for the comparative scarcity of rabbits, which was very noticeable, and that in turn may have been the cause of the absence of the Little Eagle (*Hieraaëtus morphnoides*) only one of which was seen. The first impression was one of almost complete absence of birds, but such a feeling was greatly modified as time went on, and I finally concluded that the scrub country, at any rate, had a fairly normal, though silent, population, but probably the more open country was not so fully inhabited as previously. One interesting feature was that the trough at the well, which is now kept automatically filled, was not the favoured spot I expected it to be and the only birds seen there were "Greenies" (*Meliphaga penicillata*), Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*), Willy Wagtails (*Rhipidura leucophrys*), and Red-backed Parrots (*Psephotus hæmatonotus*). Very few of the eucalypts were flowering, which may have accounted for the absence of Lorikeets. Honeyeaters, with the exception of the "Greenie" and the Spiny-cheeked, were rare.

In *The Emu*, volume XXI, page 211, the Chestnut Quail-Thrush (*Cinclosoma castanotum*) is mentioned as being reputedly common in the Park, but the species was not seen either in 1933 or during the present visit.

Birds which appear to be new to the Park were the Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*)—a male, seen near the

well; the Eastern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)—two birds seen; the Black-cheeked Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*); and Spur-winged Plover (*Lobibyx novæ-hollandiæ*)—this last being heard overhead on three consecutive nights, although not actually seen.

No Cuckoos were seen or heard. The White-backed Swallow (*Cheramœca leucosterna*), only one of which was seen in 1933, was present in small companies. Neither the Black-backed (*Malurus melanotus*) nor the Purple-backed Wren (*M. assimilis*) was seen in full plumage, although looked for closely. Redthroats (*Pyrrolæmus brunneus*) were heard but not seen. They had been seen the previous spring by two members of the party.—JOHN REED, Heidelberg, Vic., 23/4/41.

Young Pelicans.—A visit to a "pelicanery" is a most delightful experience. The evil stench of dead fish and all those other objectionable features which contribute to the "homely atmosphere" of the nesting grounds of the pelican are soon forgotten as one wanders amongst the helpless young ones. Struggling to lift their enormous heads—the newly-hatched young remind one of nothing so much as toy red rubber dolls—they gaze reproachfully at the intruder, perhaps realizing even at this early stage their utter helplessness. For young pelicans are most defenceless creatures, and they fall an easy prey to those who do not love the pelican. Many times during the last ten or twelve years the pelicans on the islands of the Coorong, South Australia, have been subjected to marauding parties which have clubbed the young ones to death or trampled them down with heavy sea-boots. The culprits are difficult to apprehend; moreover, informants are always unwilling to state their evidence publicly.

Within a couple of weeks the young pelican assumes a covering of soft white down (see illustration 1). Also, by this time he is able to leave the nest, and, with a shuffling gait, wanders away to make the acquaintance of the other young pelicans. Now the pelican colony presents a most happy sight. Hundreds of young birds congregate together in immense droves of up to 200 individuals or more (illustration 3). Such mobs are composed of birds of all ages. Some are almost as big as the adults, whilst the tiny ones scramble in between the legs of the older ones as they strive to escape the gaze of the intruder. Squealing, squawking, and grunting, the huge mass of young birds moves gradually away towards the water, into which many somewhat gingerly scramble as they take their first swim.

During October, 1939, the writer, whilst on an expedition filming the pelicans, with the Rev. Phillip Darke, encountered a most unusual individual (see illustration 2). This



Fig. 1. Young Pelican about 2-3 weeks old.



Fig. 2. Pathological specimen about same age as that shown above.
Photos. by H. T. Condon.



Fig. 3. Group of about 200 Pelicans of all ages. Note young Pied Cormorants amongst them.

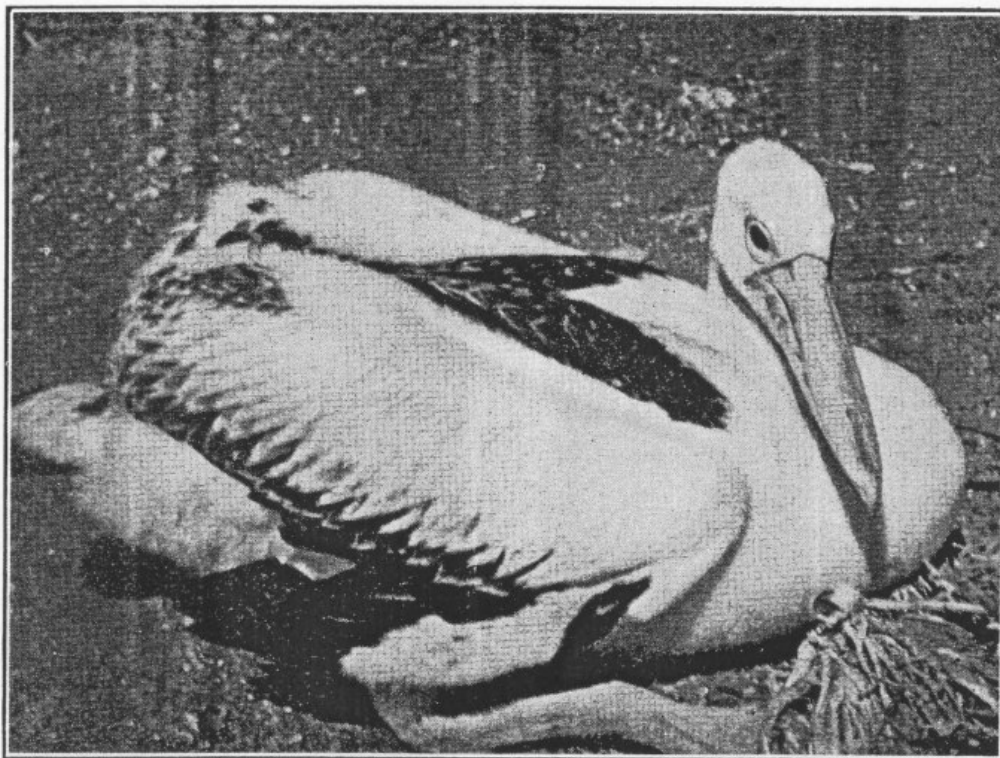


Fig. 4. Young Pelican about 2-3 months old.

Photos. by H. T. Condon.

bird, which was of approximately the same age as that shown in figure 1, had an enormously distended neck, of bladder-like appearance. At first sight it was thought that the condition was due to an obstruction in the gullet, as the bird seemed perfectly normal and healthy otherwise. Closer examination revealed that there was no internal obstruction and it was thought that the swelling was more likely due to some external injury or foreign body, although no evidence of such could be found.

In appearance, the neck looked like an enormous transparent bladder or balloon, but the transparency is not indicated in the photograph. Resisting the temptation to perform an operation—it seemed as if a simple pin-prick was all that was necessary to deflate the swelling—we made a movie film of the creature and left it to its fate. The swelling caused it little or no discomfort, and, despite the revolting appearance, was probably not serious enough to cause death.

Young pelicans vary a great deal in the colours of the face. In many the skin around the eye is dark grey, whilst in others it is flesh-white. In older birds the tip of the bill becomes a deep yellow, the remainder being pink. The iris in all birds examined was light grey; the legs and feet were flesh-white, which changes in the adult to leaden-blue. In a fortnight the young grow to six times their original size and when about a month old weigh perhaps 3 lb. The larger naked young weigh about half a pound.

By the time they are about three months old (illustration 4) the birds are almost as big as the adults, although the bill is still relatively short and the legs and feet are flesh-white in colour. These birds will attack an intruder, if handled, and make well-directed thrusts with their bills.

A full-grown female, found shot on "J" island, one of the pelican islands in the Coorong, on September 5, 1935, weighed 13½ lb. The wing-span of this bird was five feet.—H. T. CONDON, Adelaide, South Australia, 22/3/41.

Our member, M. Jean Delacour, the well-known aviculturist, formerly of the Chateau De Cleres, Seine-Inferieure, France, has reached America.

In order to meet an increase in production costs, the number of coloured plates in *The Emu* will be reduced—it is hoped temporarily only. Members are reminded that donations to the illustration fund will be appreciated.