

## Stray Feathers

**Currawongs in Western Victoria.**—The status of the three species of currawong—Pied (*Strepera graculina*), Black-winged (*S. melanoptera*), and Grey (*S. versicolor*)—is in need of careful consideration or revision in Western Victoria and the adjacent part of South Australia.

In the mountain ranges usually known as 'The Grampians' I have seen only the Grey in its typical form. Noticeably it is the largest of the three species, mid-grey in general colour with large white 'windows' in the wing. Farther west near Casterton I frequently see birds smaller in size, darker in general colour and with small white wing marks. Sometimes these wing marks are altogether absent as was the case with a typical Black-winged Currawong which, for seven weeks in July-August-September, 1950, made his home in my garden and became very tame. The only call, with one exception, that I have heard from these Casterton birds sounds exactly the same as that given by the *S. versicolor* in the Grampians. The exception is a note given on occasions by the Black-winged bird in my garden. This bird would often utter what sounded a very good imitation of the first few bars of a Kookaburra laugh.

During the first week of September, 1950, I was in the Coorong area of South Australia and there saw many birds typical of *S. melanoptera*. These birds showed no white whatever in their wings.

At Dartmoor in south-western Victoria, on September 22, 1950, I heard a mob of upwards of thirty birds making a considerable volume of noise. By their notes I expected them to be Pied Currawongs but on investigating was amazed to find that while sitting in trees or walking on the ground they all appeared to be typical Black-winged (*S. melanoptera*). However when they flew a big proportion of them had obvious white wing 'windows' in varying size and others had no white whatever on the wings.

In the Portland district, on October 2, 1950, when I was in company with Noel Learmonth, I saw and heard more members of the Black-winged species making the call note which is more usually associated with the Pied Currawong. The same day we also saw a bird that appeared black in general colour but gave the Grey Currawong call and had some white on the wing. There has only been one reliable record of the Pied species in the Casterton district, though they occasionally visit Portland, and in March, 1950, I saw a lot of them in the town of Dunkeld at the southern tip of the Grampians.

It appears that in the extreme south-western corner of Victoria *S. versicolor* and *S. melanoptera* do in some degree merge, and, proceeding on the doubtful evidence of call

notes and one doubtful sight record, that *S. graculina* may join in the general tangle.—CLAUDE AUSTIN, Coleraine, Vic., 6/11/50.

**Sea Birds in Port Phillip Bay during Stormy Weather.**—Between the *Time*, a wreck at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, and the Queenscliff piers, I observed many birds on August 5 during violent squally weather. The main source of their interest appeared to be the pilot-ship *Victoria*, anchored close in-shore at Queenscliff. Amongst the large flock of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) present were twenty-three Pacific Gulls (*Gabianus pacificus*), of which number only seven were in adult plumage, and six Giant Petrels (*Macronektes giganteus*), two of which obligingly flew over and settled in the water near the end of the pier. Whilst I was watching these birds, four Black-browed Albatrosses (*Diomedea melanophris*) put in their appearance, two continuing up the Bay while the other two settled for a short time in the water near the pilot ship. They later glided near enough to the pier to enable identification without field-glasses.

Just prior to a squall at 12.10 p.m. I noted seventeen albatrosses pass the wreck coming into the Bay but they were too far away for identification. Between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. I noted at least eight separate albatrosses from the Back Beach, two, at least, of which were the Black-browed species and one, at least, a White-capped Albatross (*Diomedea cauta*). Comparison of the underwing patterns of the two species proved interesting. Whereas the Black-browed bird showed a 'smudgy' double-margined pattern, the larger bird had a very white underwing with a very narrow black margin on the outer side. I also noted a bird with this pattern which had a brownish-black upper wing and the neck heavily washed with brown—presumably an immature bird of the White-capped species.

During the day I also noted five Australian Gannets (*Sula serrator*) and at least thirty Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) diving in the Bay. At another time three Little Pied Cormorants (*Microcarbo melanoleucus*) flew over. The only other sea birds noted were in Swan Bay on the lee-side of Queenscliff—Fairy Terns (*Sterna nereis*) of which I counted more than fifty birds.—HAROLD E. TARR, Middle Park, Vic., 5/8/50.

**Display in Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.**—At Cooktown, north Queensland, the tidal flats between the Endeavour estuary and the town provide an excellent habitat for waders and other water-birds. I paid frequent visits to this locality throughout March and most of April, 1949.

During that time Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Erolia acuminata*) were by far the most abundant of any waders.

They were well dispersed in compact flocks of from five to twenty birds, throughout the marine meadow and, with less frequency, the shallow pools of the sand-flat zone. The birds were still plentiful on April 14. Only a few were seen on April 19, and none two days later.

What were apparently courting displays by precocious males, were observed on two occasions. On March 13 one bird of a small flock was seen to pursue another, while spreading its wings stiffly beside its flanks with tips almost touching the ground, somewhat after the manner of gallinaceous birds. At the same time the tail was fanned and elevated. The 'courter' seemed both larger and darker than the other bird. A similar performance was witnessed on March 30. Then the fanned tail was depressed and vibrated. The feathers of the back were puffed out, increasing greatly the apparent size of the bird. This display was varied by elevating the tail and holding the wings out from the body. From about this time many individuals of the species were noted with increased rufous on the crown.

On April 8 an entirely different display was recorded. The head and neck were outstretched and held low, while the bird uttered low chattering notes with widely opened bill. The posture was similar to, but not quite as exaggerated as, that of the Silver Gull in its aggressive display.—G. M. STORR, Hyde Park, S.A., 25/9/50.

**Introduced Bird carrying Petal.**—On October 1, 1950, a pair of Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) flew up into the pine tree in my garden. The male bird was carrying in his bill a marigold flower, and was closely followed by the brown female. In the thick part of the tree they disappeared from view. A few moments later the marigold fell to the ground. It was a fully-open yellow bloom with a half inch stem and freshly picked, presumably by the male bird.—H. MOSEY, Lindisfarne, Tas., 3/12/50.

**Indian Myna in Queensland.**—When discussing, in *The Emu* for October of 1950, p. 97, remarks which Mr. H. E. Tarr had published on birds introduced to Australia, I made brief references to the Indian Myna in northern Queensland and then asked—"What is the authority for the claim that 'it is also recorded for the Darling Downs'? And if it is there, how did it get there?"

A week or two after that query appeared I passed over the Darling Downs from western Queensland, and as the car travelled east from Oakey I saw a pair of Indian Mynas flying into a dead tree. Subsequently Mr. E. A. R. Lord informed me that he had known the species to be on the Downs for several years. Obviously, therefore, one part of my queries ("If it is there") has to be withdrawn. I would still be interested, however, to have information touching the remainder of the questions, viz.—In what publication was

the species previously "recorded for the Darling Downs" and how did it get to the area?—A. H. CHISHOLM, Sydney, N.S.W., 24/11/50.

**Mynas on the Darling Downs.**—On December 26, 1950, I observed one Myna about eight miles south of Toowoomba on the Warwick Road. On December 31, I noted a party of twenty birds feeding in a paddock on the Oakey Road, seven miles from Toowoomba. They were first recorded from Oakey in 1946.—PETER FORSTER, Toowoomba, Qld., 19/2/51.

---

## News and Notes

### PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY

In connection with the 1951 Annual Congress, it is proposed to hold an exhibition of bird photographs at the Kodak gallery in Collins Street, Melbourne. The exhibition will be opened on October 5 and will remain open for two weeks. Members are invited to send mounted prints for the exhibition, which is designed to interest the public in bird photography and the work of the Union generally. All material should be despatched so as to reach the Hon. General Secretary by September 10.

Photographs may be of any size but are required to be mounted on mounts not exceeding 20 inches in height or 16 inches in width. Two 'standard' sizes are 20 x 16 (wide) and 16 x 12 (wide). The exhibition is open to members of the Union and the subjects must be birds on the Australian and/or New Zealand lists irrespective of where the photographs are taken.

### CORRECTION

Please note that line 22 on page 153 of *The Emu*, vol. 50, January 1951, should read—"In 1874, Bowdler Sharpe's work on the Diurnal Birds of." The line printed in its place properly belongs to line 13 on page 154, where it also appears correctly. A correction indicated for the latter line was set but apparently inadvertently first placed in the earlier line, and later in its correct position without remedying the mistake. Errors of this nature are beyond editorial control.

---

## Reviews

**Western Australian Ornithology.**—In the December, 1950, issue of the *Western Australian Naturalist*, vol. 2, no. 7, Mrs. Rica Erickson continues her detailed study of a group of Rufous Whistlers which she began in vol. 2, 1949, p. 10 of that journal. The present study ('Inheritance of Territory in Rufous Whistlers and Notes on Begging in Courtship by both Sexes,' p. 145) describes how in