

whole, while not specially enlightening, is quite interesting. In the main, the various notes serve to emphasize that, as we already knew, John Gould was not only a highly competent and extremely industrious zoologist, but also a hard-headed man of business. If, however, he had a constant urge to make money it was largely because of his staff costs—besides collectors he maintained a secretary and at least one taxidermist in London—and also because of the heavy costs entailed by his publications. His trading activities should not, therefore, be allowed to obscure recognition of his deep affection for ornithology, both as a science and a recreation.

Indeed, it is justifiable to suppose that when, in the English winter of 1850, Gould received those type specimens of the Albert Lyrebird, he returned in fancy to the many pleasant days he spent in the wilds of his "adopted country", Australia.

[To be concluded]

Variation in hybrid Magpies.—Some forty years ago C. F. Cole reported that 30 to 35 per cent of the Black-backed Magpie population of the Wangaratta district, Vict., were abnormal in coloration. In a paper on "Variations in the Black-backed Magpie Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen*" (*Emu* 212, 51-54, 1921), he regarded the variants as mutants rather than as hybrids between the Black-backed Magpie and the White-backed Magpie, *G. hypoleuca*.

Both forms of Magpies occur on the Mount Mary Plains, S.A., and mixed pairs and hybrid birds have been recorded by me. Male hybrids have either a narrow black bar, or an incomplete bar, separated by a white gap of varying width. Similar variation occurs in the female hybrids, but occasional females have a grey back with a narrow black bar. A specimen of the latter type was collected by the writer at Sutherlands, S.A., on January 18, 1959, and the skin is now in the South Australian Museum.

In my article on "Black-backed Magpie extends range" (*Emu*, 56 (5), 348, 1956), I reported that the black-backed birds were slowly increasing in number and spreading westward toward the foothills of the Mount Lofty Range. More recently black-backed birds have been observed well inside the territory of the White-backed Magpie as far west as Kapunda. The possibility of such exceptional occurrences being in fact melanistic mutants rather than true *G. tibicen* has not been adequately considered and it must be borne in mind in any serious study of the problem. In the event of the black-backed type being genetically recessive any local groups that may be produced would be absorbed by the white-backed population in due course.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 29/12/62.