

"type" egg of the Victoria Rifle Bird, discovered by Messrs. D. Le Souëf and H. G. Barnard on the Barnard Island, became the property of the museum to which Mr. North belongs.*

From photo-mechanical and typographical points of view the work leaves little to be desired. It is admirably printed on coated art paper, quarto size, with broad margins. The half-tone blocks of nests are splendid, but the uncoloured figures of eggs suffer somewhat from "halation," affecting seriously the markings about the "high lights." Where subscribers have ordered coloured copies, however, this fault will probably not exist.

In conclusion, the author, and all concerned with him in his task, are to be congratulated on the book's general excellence, while the trustees deserve hearty thanks for allowing subscribers to obtain it complete (uncoloured plates), at 25s. It is a gift at such a price.

Mr. Robt. Hall on the Genus *Gymnorhina* (Magpies).

IN the "Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria," vol. xiv. (August, 1901), Mr. Hall contributes an interesting and most remarkable paper on the Australian Magpies, of which there are four reputed species. Should the indefatigable author never write another article on ornithology, this one alone will render him famous—if all his deductions can be proved—for all time.

It appears to Mr. Hall that far away back in the dark ages an extinct or ancestral "Piping-Crow" took on the colour of its times, and was a "uniform black type," and out of it evolved "one species only, *G. leuconota* (White-backed Magpie), with one variety, namely, that having a black back, known as *G. tibicen*." As the original type was supposed to be black, one would have expected to find the bird with most black about it (the Black-backed) *the species*, and the further removed White-backed bird *the variety*.

The article bristles with hypotheses and exceptions. But do not exceptions prove the rule? It is hard to define a species from a sub-species or variety, but it may be fairly taken for granted that *a species* stands good where the specific markings or features are *constant as a rule*. Upon this rule, as well as on geographical distribution, the Magpies can be readily divided into four species or races, at least, which Mr. Hall has not apparently disproved. (1) There are the adult birds (male and female respectively) with white and grey backs (*G. leuconota*) confined to the south-eastern coastal region chiefly; (2) the lesser-sized white and grey backs (*G. hyperleuca*) to Tasmania; (3) the white and dark grey or black backs (*G. dorsalis*) to the western territory; while (4) the black backs (in both male and female), *G. tibicen*, represent the

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great balance of the continent, particularly the eastern half. With regard to the nestlings of the extreme eastern and western "White-backs" there is a noticeable difference. Those of the east (*leuconota*) possess *rust-coloured or greyish mottled* backs, while those of the west (*dorsalis*), not to mention their longer and narrower bills, have *brownish-black or almost black* backs.

With regard to the rule of the Tasmanian smaller race of White-backs, Mr. Hall does not explain two potent factors. If not a good species, why is the race smaller, when it is the rule that Tasmanian birds of other species are *larger* than their representatives on the mainland? And why are no Black-backs found on the island? Again, can Mr. Hall explain why no White-backed birds exist, say, from the region of the Murray (excepting near its source and mouth) to the district of the Gulf of Carpentaria—the great habitat of the Black-backs? By the way, it may be noted too that the further north the smaller the birds. How does that fact coincide with the smaller White-backs being further south in Tasmania?

Mr. Hall's material would have possibly been stronger were it not mostly collected in Victoria, where the Black and White-backed varieties inosculate, and where it is likely that hybrids occur, instead of selecting specimens from the strongholds of each "so-called" species. The instances he has quoted at length from a correspondent at Minyip, Victoria, are hardly fair tests, because it is a locality where the two species are likely to overlap, and possibly he has over-estimated the number of "hybrid-like" birds in the neighbourhoods of Bacchus Marsh and Western Port—there being only one or two known examples *in skins*, at all events.

Taking the paper as a whole, the author has put a deal of thought and originality into it. He could not have selected a more popular class of birds for Australians. No doubt it will stir up investigation, and we hope to publish in due course in the columns of *The Emu* correspondence on this fascinating subject from all parts of Australia.

A Parrot Exhibition.

THE exhibition of Parrots, &c., at the South Suburban Canary Show in July was a genuine success, there being 105 exhibits, comprising 17 species of Cockatoos, Parrots, and Parrakeets. Such a collection of gay forms has not been previously seen in Australia.

It is to be hoped the exhibition will induce bird-lovers to study more thoroughly aviculture by building spacious aviaries to encourage Australian birds to breed (as has been successfully done in England, Germany, and India), instead of confining their pets in small cages and teaching the occupants merely to speak and whistle.