

1913, prohibiting the importation into the Commonwealth of the plumage and skins of certain birds, viz. :—

Birds-of-Paradise.

Humming-Birds.

Monal, or any one of the species of Asiatic Pheasants, such as the Impeyan Pheasant.

Argus, or any one of the species of Asiatic Pheasant, such as the Argus Pheasant.

Crowned Pigeon, or any of the species of large-crested Pigeons of New Guinea and adjacent islands.

Owls.

Kingfishers.

Macaws; any Parrot of the genus *Ara*, *Sittace*, or *Macrocerus*.

Stork tribe.

Heron tribe (including the Egret, from which is obtained plumes commonly known as "Ospreys").

Ibises and Spoonbills.

Todies.

Cock-of-the-Rock, and the

Quezal, or Resplendent Trogon.

Traders who import and travellers or other persons who bring any of these into Australia will find trouble, for the Customs will rigorously enforce the law, which is certainly good as far as it goes. What is needed, however, is the more drastic action of the United States. A large and increasing quantity of feathers, other than those prohibited, is received into South Australia—£4,000, £7,000, and £10,000 worth of dressed feathers during the past three years respectively—and this does not include either feathers used in imported millinery or undressed feathers, of which latter, however, there are few. The imports into the whole Commonwealth are also heavy, and show a remarkable increase. The value of dressed feathers rose from £45,619 in 1911 to £85,983 in 1912, and those undressed from £5,096 to £6,281—that is, £92,000 worth in one year, more than half from the United Kingdom and £37,000 worth from France and Germany. Think for a moment what merciless destruction of beautiful, free, wild birds this alone represents, and then say whether you, as an individual, intend to do your little best to continue it or to prevent it.

Stray Feathers.

Birds at Lighthouse.—The following record of birds that struck the Goose Island Lighthouse was forwarded by the Secretary of the Marine Board of Hobart, Tasmania :—" 25th July, 11.35 p.m., Sandpiper; 7th August, 12.15 a.m., bird not seen; 27th August, 2.35 a.m., Starling; 5th September, 1.5 a.m., bird not seen; 12th September, 3.55 a.m. Dusky Robin, 4.40 a.m. Fantail; 28th October, 10.30 p.m., Storm-Petrel; 29th October, 10.50 p.m., Storm-Petrel."

Food of the Yellow-bellied Shrike-Tit (No. 422, *Falcunculus frontatus*, Latham).—Recently, the pleasant, self-satisfied two-syllable note of some Yellow-bellied Shrike-Tits directed my attention to a wattle tree, and, on glancing upwards, I observed a pair of these dainty birds busily engaged devouring cotton scale, which infested the wattle tree, and was slowly destroying it. The birds worked from the outer twigs along the branches inwards to the main trunk of the tree, and cleaned off the scale in a workmanlike manner, uttering as they proceeded along the boughs notes of pleasure, and raising and lowering their large crests. For two days I observed "Nature's tree-sprayers," and estimated that the work performed daily by each bird, when compared to that of a man, was worth to the community at least 9d. Approximately, the value of the work performed by each Yellow-bellied Shrike-Tit is £14 per annum to the Commonwealth.—A. H. E. MATTINGLEY. Victoria, June, 1914.

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Tameness of Native Birds.—A lady member in Tasmania writes:—"I amuse myself watching the birds a great deal. The Wrens (*Malurus*), ten of them, will come to within 4 feet of my couch on the verandah, and pick up crumbs. They are in sombre plumage, with the exception of two, whose tails are becoming blue. My Wrens scold each other, and hunt round the plants and grass. A Scarlet-breast (Robin) comes and perches on a bamboo blind at my head, about 5 feet away. He catches flies. The Silver-eyes (*Zosterops*) spend their time on the cherry trees, about 10 feet away. A Crescent Honey-eater has been coming for several days to a delphinium flower about 6 feet from me. It seems to live hereabouts, and I often hear its shrill call. Our half-tame Whistling Shrike-Thrushes come and perch near. They will take meat a foot distant from my head, and I hope that they will feed from my hand before long. The female Thrush is the tamest. She has a white feather in her plumage. She remains with a piece of meat in her bill for about ten seconds, and watches me; then she flies up to her 'cupboard,' a crack in the roof of the wood-shed, where she stores the meat, and tears it to pieces. Sometimes a Butcher-Bird comes along and examines the 'cupboard,' knowing that the Thrushes often leave food there. If they are hungry the Thrushes will come on to the tank and give a loud call, clacking their beaks together. The Dusky Flycatchers (*Rhipidura*) fly round the wood-shed, where they capture many flies. They are also fond of a big ivy-laden stump, where they spend hours feeding, flying, and chattering. I saw a Yellow-throated Honey-eater (*Ptilotis*) on it yesterday, and a Wattle-Bird previously. One day a Green Parrot (*Platycercus*) sat on the pine and called 'Tussock' for about a quarter of an hour."

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Peculiar Actions of *Leipoa ocellata*.—In October, 1913, I visited a tract of mallee scrub some 30 miles distant from my

school, with the intention of collecting from about three mounds of *Leipoa ocellata*, and then devoting my time to general collecting. But I am pleased to say that my time was nearly all occupied in watching what I consider to be a peculiar action of a Mallee-Fowl. One morning I walked through dense mallee in search of a mound. I must have been searching for nearly half an hour before I was rewarded by finding a mound, from which a bird hurriedly departed. (I had been informed that I would not see a bird near the mound.) I examined the mound and found that it was very much damaged. I walked about 30 yards away, to a spot where I could see without being seen from the mound, and waited for over two hours, reading and preparing specimens. My wait was successful, for at length I saw a bird walking near the mound. It went to the other side, and after some minutes began working—dust was flying. I waited some time, and then decided to work round and catch a glimpse of the bird. I was complimenting myself on having succeeded, when “snap!”—I had trodden on a dry stick, and, needless to say, the bird had vanished. An examination showed that more of the mound had been scratched down. I visited the mound again next morning, and, to my surprise, found that it was practically a ruin. All of the north side had been broken down, and the material scattered about. Four fresh eggs lay amid the ruins. I searched for marks of a fox, but could find none. Scratchings similar to those made by the Mallee-Fowl could be plainly seen. I am of opinion that the bird had something to do with the wrecking of the mound, but would like to have the views of other observers on the subject. Mallee-Fowl are very numerous in the new country. I also had the pleasure of seeing large numbers of Bronze-winged Pigeons (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—REG. L. WALTON, R.A.O.U. Boigbeat (Vic.)

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A Friendly Coachwhip-Bird.—Those who are familiar with the Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*) know that it is oftener heard than seen, and that fact is borne out by my six years' experience on Ellerslie, a homestead not much more than two miles from Drouin. Throughout the period the bird may have been observed a score of times, but my area of observation lies within very narrow limits, being confined to an adjacent gully, Gum-scrub Creek, and Tarago River. The latter stream is remarkable for its meandering course. I can record only two instances of meeting with Coachwhip-Birds on hilly ground, a single individual being seen in each case. Gum-scrub Creek was formerly a rushy morass, of considerable breadth in some places. Of late years, though a drain has been cut, the slopes on both sides of its course through Ellerslie, as far as scrubs are concerned, may be described as jungle. I have often rambled along the fern-tangled inclines without hearing the birds call, but that is no evidence that they were not among the bracken. According to my experience, with rare exceptions, the bird betrays its presence only by its whip-like notes, which competent authorities inform us are produced.

by the male and female joining their voices together in such a manner that they seem to be uttered by one bird. At that rate, a pair claims ownership of the top end of the creeklet, where it enters this estate. Crossing the swamp at that point, the calls have been heard often enough in the dense covers which terminate at the upper boundary of the property. Once a Coachwhip-Bird was seen prancing along a fallen tree whose bole was bare of bark and had a mat of bracken on both sides. I studied the bird's capers. It seemed to be a born dandy, dominated by self-esteem. With partially elevated tail, and crest perked up, it bounded along the log until it reached a splinter, which it endeavoured to displace. Failing, it retreated a little distance, returned, and, putting in a supreme effort, met with success. The next procedure was to search for food. Not finding any, the bird took refuge in his ferny bower. My first view of this scrub denizen was obtained in the orchard in winter—it must be remembered that fruit trees were leafless. This bird, without being really shy, proved extremely restless; it visited one apple-tree, then another, and never alighted upon the ground.

On 6th March, 1914, my sister informed me that a bird never previously observed was in the garden. On my going to the front verandah the newcomer was seen, and instantly recognized. A variety of flowering plants abut upon the verandah, which runs all round the house. Apparently the bird was at home. It was surprising to me that a timid bird such as the Coachwhip seems to be should prove so tame. This bird was fearless in the presence of human beings. A close approach did not alarm it in the slightest degree. Of course, I avoided movements of an alarming nature; but the bird did not heed footsteps on the verandah floor, though when a loose board slipped down with a clatter it instantly darted into cover. With rare exceptions, it was seen at all hours prospecting busily around the house, generally under the shrubbery, until 11th March, when it finally disappeared. My impression was that it had gone to a more suitable location, but this conjecture was wide of the mark, for later my sister discovered the bird drowned in an underground tank. This tank, though planked over, has openings, through one of which the bird had entered either for a drink or to make an inspection. Evidently this mishap occurred on the 11th, because at 11 a.m. it came to drink water from a shallow pie-dish placed in the shade for our pet Magpies. On the previous day it was not visible till 2 p.m., when it bounded briskly along the verandah, straight for the dish, and slaked its thirst in a rapid, jerky manner. Once, while drinking, it lost its hold on the vessel's rim, and slipped into the water. The mischance did not trouble the bird. Regaining the rim, it once more proceeded to refresh itself. On one occasion both passage doors standing wide open, the bird pranced through the hallway, which is 46 feet in length. Another day I was standing on the garden path when the Coachwhip-Bird passed barely 6 inches from my feet.

Although narrowly watched, it was never seen to walk or run; its mode of progression was confined to hops of greater or less rapidity. As a rule, it fed beneath cover, save of an evening, between two lights, when it was observed upon an open space near a large clump of rosemary, into which it sped when I passed. It was constantly seen on the move, but presumably took spells where it was screened from view. Occasionally it showed off, spreading its tail. I believe that it was young, because the cheek-markings, instead of being white, were greyish-white. When the bird arrived we were having a spell of dry weather, strong sun-heat, and locally some small bush-fires. These causes combined may account for the bird's visit.—ISAAC BATEY, R.A.O.U.

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Tasmanian Spotless Crake.—At Christmastide the Misses Fletcher, Springfield, Tasmania, were good enough to show me a series of eggs belonging to this Crake. The specimens were considerably larger and different from those of the mainland bird. Miss J. A. Fletcher, R.A.O.U., has since kindly sent a skin for identification which is larger and darker coloured (head almost black) compared with birds in the National Museum, Melbourne, taken in Victoria. As I was aware that Mr. H. L. White, R.A.O.U., Belltrees, New South Wales, possessed more material, I submitted the skin to him. The following is his reply:—

"If one looks for sub-specific differences I should say that the birds may be separated. The comparative measurements are:—

	Wing.		Tarsus.		Bill.		Longest Toe.
Tasmania	90 mm.	...	32 mm.	...	19 mm.	...	27 mm.
New South Wales	82 "	...	30 "	...	18 "	...	22 "
Western Australia	88 "	...	31 "	...	20 "	...	28 "

"In colouration Tasmania is the darkest, then come New South Wales and Western Australia, in that order."

The wing measurements of the two birds in the National Museum are each 84 mm.

General description of the Tasmanian bird:—Under surface dark neutral grey, lighter on the throat, and blending into an almost black head. Upper surface dark chestnut.

Should it be found when more material is examined that the insular bird is constantly different from the mainland one, the former locality being that of Gould's *Porzana immaculata*, according to Gregory Mathews ("Birds of Australia," vol. i., p. 217), then he will have to provide a sub-specific name for the mainland form.
—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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Lyre-Birds and the Camera.—In August, 1913, Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S., and Dr. G. Horne, of Melbourne, journeyed to Poowong (Vic.), equipped with good cameras, to take photographs of the Victoria Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriae*) in its native haunts.

The weather was wet, and though the rain did not daunt the enthusiasts in the least, it nevertheless affected their photography. Mr. Le Souëf took two photographs of the female bird (from about 12 or 15 feet) near her nest, but the light was too unfavourable for success. Photographs of the nests were taken during the short periods of sunshine, but much of the time was spent close to a fire in the dense scrub. The female bird fed and scratched within a few feet of us all the time, and even followed in our footsteps when we moved away. We also had some mimicry from the male bird. On 31st August, 1913, Mr. Charles Barrett and Mr. G. Finlay, of the Bird Observers' Club, made the same trip, under particularly trying conditions, for it rained most of the day. But it is on just such days that the male Lyre-Bird is at his best with mimicry. On this occasion one fairly excelled himself, for in addition to the usual imitation of birds, it favoured us with the bark of a cattle dog, repeated 20 or 30 times, and also the whistle of the man calling the dog off. Its sense of modulation was perfect, and altogether a revelation. We found a Satin-Bird's (*Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus*) bower containing many playthings, such as birds' skull, pieces of blue glass, coloured feathers, many flower bells, and different leaves and straws. Notwithstanding the unfavourable weather, some creditable camera work was accomplished under great difficulties. The female bird was very tame, and offered every chance, even allowing Mr. Barrett to unpack and set up his camera within 9 feet of where she was perching. She followed us about the scrub as before, and while we were at dinner a beautiful male, in full plumage, slowly strutted in a complete circle around us. Refusing to be intimidated by the fire and smoke, he passed within 20 feet of us, and was on view for perhaps three minutes. On 13th September, 1913, Mr. L. G. Chandler visited the same locality, and on this occasion the Fates were indeed kind, for the day proved to be of the kind that a photographer gladly welcomes. While still far from the scrub we could hear the crack of the Coach-whip-Bird and occasional outbursts from the Lyre-Bird. We proceeded straight to the nest, and the female immediately appeared, and for awhile we studied and admired her, Mr. Chandler with much astonishment at her tameness. About a chain away from the nest there was a broken fern stump about 5 feet high, but leaning gracefully, and relieved by lichens and "ladies' finger," staghorn, and other ferns, and forming a perfect bush pedestal. "Now, Mr. Chandler," I said, "if you will focus on the top of this fern stump at the distance you prefer for a perfect photograph; I think that I can induce her to perch on it and remain long enough for an exposure." Mr. Chandler hesitated, thinking it a joke, but, finding that I was in earnest, did as requested, and then concealed himself under some dead fronds of a tree fern about 4 feet from the pedestal, and with the bulb release at the end of a length of rubber tubing in his hand to operate the camera shutter. On previous visits I had noted that if the bird lost sight of us for an

instant when following us, she *invariably* sprang up on to some stump or tree nearest to hand, and it had occurred to me that we could gain advantage from this habit. I had not explained all this to Mr. Chandler, hence his hesitation. When all was ready I went to the nest to make the young bird call, and when the female appeared proceeded slowly right between the camera and the stump (fern), the bird following in my footsteps, about 12 paces behind. When she was between the camera and the stump I stopped, and she followed suit. Presently, as was her usual habit, she began scratching and raking for food. Directly her eye was off me I lay down, and when she looked up and missed me she sprang up to the nearest resting-place from which to get a better view—namely, the bush pedestal. Mr. Chandler pressed the bulb and the photograph was taken. If only I could have had a snap of Mr. Chandler's own surprised and delighted face when he emerged from his cover, my happiness would have been complete. We took a number of photographs, each from a chosen spot. In one case I had just scratched the bird's head with my stick. While I was doing that later on she took the end of the stick in her claws and contemptuously threw it aside. Photographs of Lyre-Birds' nests were taken, some of them in the state to which the birds nearly always reduce them after a season or two, if they are near or on the ground, probably in searching for food, for the decaying sticks and leaves offer shelter for grubs and so forth. The lining of the old nests is frequently used for new nests. We noted that the female bird did not sit in the nest at night with her young, though the latter was not three weeks old. This fact, I think, is not generally known.—L. C. COOK. Poowong, Victoria.

From Magazines, &c.

Ornithological Journal.—The second number (April, 1914) of the new quarterly magazine, *The South Australian Ornithologist*, has been issued. It contains four important "Additions to a List of the Birds of Australia," by Gregory M. Mathews, F.R.S.E.—a new species of Owl, *Tyto galei*, an entirely new genus allied to *Zosterops*, *Macgillivrayornis claudi*, and two new sub-species of Finches, named respectively *Egintha temporalis macgillivrayi* and *Neochmia phaeon albiventer*. The habitats are given as the Pascoe and Claude Rivers, Northern Queensland. These discoveries were made by two members of the R.A.O.U.—Dr. Wm. Macgillivray, Broken Hill, and Mr. J. A. Kershaw, F.E.S., National Museum, Melbourne, to whom credit is due. Their field-notes will appear later in *The Emu*. Mr. Mathews also contributes an interesting historical "Note on *Platycercus hæmatogaster*, Gould," while there are other popular field-notes on different birds by local subscribers.