

The mellow note of the Grey Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus torquatus*), rings through the bush, a wonderful song. The Black-backed (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), and White-backed Magpies (*G. hypoleuca*), birds closely related, were singing their carols from early morn to late at night, pausing only for their meals. On moonlight nights they can also frequently be heard singing, while in the smaller shrubs the Black-and-white Fantail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) sings "Sweet pretty creature" as he flits among the moonbeams.

The Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), nests among the secluded billabongs of the Murray, and it is a wonderful sight to see a flock of these birds rise from the water and float around in the sky like aeroplanes, or to see them gently drifting on some quiet water like so many galleons.

Settlement is rapidly changing the fascinating wild Mallee into a productive garden. It is to be hoped that the settlers will recognize the economic value of birds, and in clearing their land leave a small section in its natural state as sanctuary for our feathered friends.

Origin of the Name Podargus.

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Robt. Hall, in *A Key to the Birds of Australia*, gives the derivation of the generic name *Podargus* as *pous*, *podos*, foot. This is scarcely satisfactory, as it denotes no particular feature; all birds have feet. Mr. H. Wolstenholme, in the recently-published R.A.O.U. Checklist (p. 126), ventures further. He writes: "A Vieillot name, evidently from *Le podarge* of Cuvier, which might be formed from G: *pous* (*podos*) foot, and *argos*, slow. The word has, strangely, the opposite meaning in the *Iliad* of Homer, where *Podargus* is the name of a swift-footed horse; there being another Greek adjective, *argos*, which means swift."

For this suggested explanation to be applicable these birds would have to be either noticeably slower or swifter on the wing than most, but in fact as regards pace their flight is only normal. Does not the name rather come from G: *podagra*, gout in the feet? True, there is the transposition of the two letters *g* and *r*, but we get much the same in *dacelo* from *alcedo*. Mr. Wolstenholme points out that Vieillot probably formed his name on Cuvier's *Le podarge*. Well, *podarge* in French means gouty—gout in the feet.

How do the *Podargidæ* bear this out? I do not collect and therefore shoot but few specimens, but years ago I shot for the purpose of identification a Plumed Frogmouth (*Podargus papuensis*), and while it was still fresh in the flesh I took a

careful description of the bird and noted down any striking features. In my "Birds of the Richmond District, N.Q." (*The Emu*, Vol. VI, p. 43), I mentioned this specimen and wrote, "The feet are quaintly chubby and well earn for the bird its generic name; the toes, being thick and swollen at the base, taper rapidly to their extremity." I took it for granted at the time that *Podargus* came from *podagra*. The swollen appearance of the feet was very striking and suggested at once three carrots tied in a bunch. It is hardly likely that I chanced on an abnormal specimen, and the bird's feet appeared quite healthy.

What puzzles me is the fact that I have turned up all the leading authors on Australian birds without finding any reference to anything unusual in the feet of the *Podargidæ*. I would be greatly interested in hearing the opinion on this matter of any ornithologist who has handled these birds in the flesh, and would ask those who may have the chance of doing so in future to take careful note. Possibly the peculiarity may not show in the shrunken feet of a dried skin, or so little as to be overlooked.

Stray Feathers.

Nesting Habits of Lyre-Birds.—At a recent meeting of the R.A.O.U. in Melbourne the nesting of *Menura* was discussed, and its habit of making a "platform" or skeleton nest, to be used later on, appeared to cause some astonishment. I believe this has been mentioned before by other observers, but it has been known to myself and friends since 1917.

Our first experience was a photograph taken of the mere outline of a nest built into the bank of a creek at Selby, in the Dandenong Ranges, during 1917. This platform or skeleton nest was photographed by Mr. Tom Tregellas, and during the winter of 1918 it was still in the same condition; but on July 13, 1919, the nest was perfected and contained an egg.

During the winter months of 1925 I was visiting another gully near Warburton, and close to a nest built into the creek-bank a platform was built up on the top of a large, conical rock on the bank close by. Then came disastrous fires and this gully was absolutely gutted as the second fire, which swept it, completed the destruction of anything the first had missed. When we visited it during July and August of 1926 we were surprised to hear the calls of numerous Lyre-Birds all over the hillsides. There was not a vestige of greenery anywhere. Both hillsides and the gully itself were bare, with the exception of hundreds of fallen trees, mostly mountain-