Stray Feathers

The Grey-headed Albatross at Bunbury, W.A.—On June 26, 1939, during a period of very rough weather, I was walking on the beach at South Bunbury, when I observed, ahead of me, a large greyish bird crouching down at the foot of the sandhills. When I walked up to it, it paid no heed to my presence but remained perfectly still with beak tucked under its wing. I saw at once that it was an Albatross of a species I had not previously met with. The head and neck were of a soft slate grey, with the back and wings of a much deeper shade. A strong wind was blowing, so, to give the bird a chance of recovery, though no food was available, I lifted it by its wings and carried it to a sheltered spot in the adjacent sandhills. I returned later in the day to see how it had fared. It had not moved, evidently being in the last stages of exhaustion. I carried it home, where it died a few hours later. I made careful notes of the coloration of the soft parts whilst it was still alive, and also took measurements immediately after death. I had, in the meantime, identified the bird as a Grey-headed Albatross (*Diomedea chrysostoma*).

In *The Emu*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 99-100, Major H. M. Whittell contributed an article on previous records of the species on the coasts of this State, where he also discussed the status of Gould's records of this Albatross "in Australian seas." It will be noted that the present bird is only the fourth occurrence for Western Australia, one specimen referred to not being fit for preservation.

On learning of my discovery Major Whittell kindly sent me *The South Australian Ornithologist*, vol. XIII, part 5, which contains a valuable and very detailed account of Albatrosses in South Australian waters by Mr. H. T. Condon of the South Australian Museum.

I found my specimen on dissection to be a very young female probably a year old, or a little more. The body was much emaciated, and the stomach empty, but the intestines contained some fluid of a white limey nature. The plumage was in excellent order. The bird had evidently expended its last strength in an effort to reach land and had quite escaped the severe buffeting of the breakers. This fact must be borne in mind when the total length of the bird is compared with other records. It was only 710 mm. Mathews and Iredale give 910 mm., and Mr. H. T. Condon's three specimens—all males—have an average of 828 mm., with wing expanse 2129 mm. (7 feet). The wing expanse of my bird is four inches less, *viz.*, 6 feet 8 inches. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Mathews and Iredale give 710 mm. as the total length of the Yellow-nosed Albatross. A difference of eight inches* between two nearly-allied

*But only half that amount on Condon's figures.—Ed.

birds suggests the possibility of a printer's error, a nine being substituted for a seven.

The following figures represent all measurements of the present specimen: Wing expanse 6 feet 8 inches, total length 710 mm., wing 495, tail 210, tarsus 70, middle toe 125, culmen 110, width of beak at base 20, depth 40. The colour of the soft parts is as follows: Beak dull black except in front of forehead, which is suffused with grey, and the lower edges of the rami, which are distinctly of a dull Indian red for the greater part of their length. The legs, toes, webs and claws are of a uniform pale flesh colour, without any shading on the ridges or joints. This colour deepened to a much darker shade of flesh pink and remains the same in the dried skin. The plumage of the present specimen agrees very well with Mr. Condon's description of a young male except that the chin and throat are almost entirely white in the centre. The greater under-wing coverts, I find, are distinctly paler than the rest of the under-wing and in flight this would form a light band across the whole wing.—F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury, W.A.

Collecting Permits in America.—The present position of the collector in relation to ornithology in America is succinctly set out in a circular recently distributed by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to all holders of scientific collecting permits. The following extracts are from a copy received by Dr. D. L. Serventy, who had been granted a permit during his stay in U.S.A.:

For the past one hundred years or more, many individuals and educational institutions have been engaged in studies of our native wild birds. This necessitated the collection of specimens to be preserved as scientific study skins, or as mounted birds for public display. Much has been learned in regard to the classification, variation, distribution, and economic status of our birds, but we all admit more can and will be learned as future studies are made. For this reason alone, the Biological Survey and most State Game Commissions still grant scientific collecting permits to a limited number of responsible individuals and institutions.

Holders of these permits must recognize the fact that these permits are a special privilege and not a right. Furthermore, they must recognize the fact that the general public is not especially interested in scientific bird study and would rather see the birds and hear their songs in the woods and fields than see the dead or dried skins in a cabinet. For these reasons, the holder of a permit to collect birds should use discretion, always remembering that he is liable to bring criticism on those responsible for granting permits if he shoots birds along our public highways, in thickly settled communities, on our public beaches, or trespasses on private property without permission from the owner.

A great many of our birds' life histories are well-known. Public museums have series of birds representing all ages and plumages.

There are excellent private collections, the owners of which are usually willing to have bird students study them at any time. Therefore, collectors should never shoot any bird of any species unless for a definite purpose and never more specimens than are actually needed.

Recently, flagrant abuses of collecting permits have been reported to the Biological Survey offices and to State Game authorities. Shooting in public places, killing more birds than are necessary, and killing for "sport" alone are among the common abuses. If you wish to continue the privilege of bird collecting, acquaint yourself thoroughly with the State and Federal laws governing the issuance of permits, and all provisions of these laws. Remember, the other fellow's feeling in regard to shooting in closed season and in public places. Flagrant violations of the collecting regulations, abuses of the privilege, thoughtless shooting in public places will not be tolerated, or your permit may be revoked.

It may be mentioned that under U.S. law a permit holder must annually declare on statutory forms exact details of his collecting activities.

A Further Note on the Field Identification of Waders.—My contribution to the above subject in *The Emu*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 438-42, was written in a supplementary, rather than critical spirit. True I took exception to the small figure representing the Grey Plover in flight, and I still hold the view that the pure white depicting the neck and underpart, suggests more truly the same parts in a Greenshank or a Dotterel. In a Grey Plover the white is not of a pure tint, and in the figure it accentuates the black axillaries, which again in nature are not of a clear. black. A little judicious shading would have obviated these too sharp contrasts.

The passage quoted by Dr. Serventy from Rowan (*British Birds*, vol. xx, pp. 37-8) certainly emphasizes the difficulty and the untrustworthiness of identification of the American Golden Plover and the Grey Plover without actual specimens in support, and we may well apply these remarks locally. Rowan's further remark about the dark tail of the Golden Plover when in flight, compared with that of the Grey Plover which appears to be light, is valuable but here the incidence of the light comes into play. Assuming that his field observations were made in the northern hemisphere during the autumn or winter months, the subdued power of the sunlight will be in great contrast with the quivering glare obtaining at the time Waders are to be found on our beaches and salt marshes, making the "medley of detail when the birds take wing" more difficult of analysis. To my eyes chequered or mottled coloration is more discernible than striation, and I think in brilliant sunlight the difference in shade of a Plover's tail even when flying directly away from an observer, would not be very striking.

I cannot give any reliable hints in the identification of the Sand Dotterels. A flock of 20 or 30 visit one of our beaches every summer but until I obtain a specimen for a "feather to feather" examination, I should hesitate to say of what species they are.

It is one thing for an experienced and trained observer like Dr. Serventy, who knows what feather tracts to look for, when identifying Waders in a favoured locality like Pelican Point, but quite another matter for the beginner, who may not enjoy such exceptional opportunities. What I recommend to the beginner is to study the general appearance of Waders from the excellent coloured figures and photo. plates now available, making mental notes of general contour, size, peculiar beaks, long legs or otherwise, and comparing his field impressions with detailed descriptions of plumage in standard ornithological works. My own mistakes of sixty-odd years ago convince me of the truth of Rowan's lament—"Alas, few Waders are so contrastly marked as to be fool proof."

I regret I cannot give any further information concerning the notes of the local common Sandpipers: the few birds visiting here are quite silent.—F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury, W.A.

Rainbow-birds and Mistletoe-birds.—I refer to Mr. John Gray's "Stray" on page 63 of the July *Emu*. The Rainbow-bird is very common here during the summer months, and breeds in the banks of the local creeks and dams—in spite of the fact that there are no apiarists here, and, in fact, very few wild bees. The birds must indeed be hard put to it to find sufficient food, not only for themselves, but for their young, if, as Mr. R. E. Martin says, Rainbow-birds "eat almost nothing else but bees." I should say that there are more of the birds here than there are bees, but I have never been able to find a bird in an emaciated state, as would surely be expected from the evidence in *The Australian Beekeeper*. Am I to assume that the birds gorge themselves on bees in other districts to such an extent that they are able to exist here for several months on stored-up fat? And what of the young birds? Could it be that they exist on promises of things to come? In this district, at least, the Rainbow-birds are definitely useful, as, in company with Ibis and Wood-Swallows, they feed on the plague locusts (*Chortoicetes terminifera*). I have often noticed the flash of green and the zig-zag flight of the Rainbow-bird amongst a flock of Wood-Swallows feeding on the "grasshopper" swarms, and have proved, by watching the feeding habits of individual birds well away from the flocks, that these insects form at least part of its diet. However, I have not been able to find that the Rainbow-bird emulates

the Wood-Swallows by storing away a larder of the insects in hollow stumps or logs.

Mistletoe-birds are also rather common here. I wonder if Mr. Taylor could enlighten us as to what these birds eat when the mistletoe berries are not ripe? I am afraid that he did not make a very extensive search for a substitute for mistletoe berries on which to feed his caged birds, for, for most of the year, there are no ripe berries on the mistletoes. Still, one must admit that the beautiful little birds do spread the parasite, but do they really deserve the treatment meted out to them by Taylor?—P. A. BOURKE, Gilgandra, N.S.W., 12/8/39.

Victims of Storm.—The enormous mortality among ocean birds occurring in a protracted period of stormy weather may be gauged from the fact that after a recent fortnight of rain, hail and wind, 34 specimens reached the Museum. More than 30 of them were obtained on 30 miles of coastline near Fremantle—from Safety Bay in the south to North Beach in the north. How many were cast ashore on Garden, Carnac and Rottnest Islands, which fringe and protect more than half of this area, has not transpired.

The presence of *Anous tenuirostris* and *Sterna dougalli*, the latter now recorded from the Perth area for the first time, both of which nest on the Abrolhos Group 300 miles to the north, gives some indication of the power of the north and north-west winds prevalent in the early period of the "blow." The *Puffinus assimilis* may also have been Abrolhos Island birds, though small colonies nest nearer to Perth. Details of the eight species represented follow:—

Diomedea chlororhyncha (Gmel.). Two specimens—both young birds with black bills, condition too imperfect for preservation.

Macronectes giganteus (Gmel.). Six specimens—one preserved, one sent to zoo, three liberated, one useless: all birds in dark juvenal plumage.

Pterodroma lessoni (Garnot). One specimen from North Beach in excellent condition—stomach contents a cephalopod beak and many remains of *Spirula peronii*, both shell and flesh.

Puffinus assimilis Gould. Ten specimens, three added to the collection, the rest too poor to preserve. All had the culmen black, with latericorn and lower mandible blue, legs and feet blue, outer toe and stripe along the tarsus black, webs pale yellow wth dark markings at the free margin.

Pachyptila vittata (Gmel.). Four specimens—one very fine, one indifferent, the rest poor: skulls only kept.

Pachyptila desolata (Gmel). Eight specimens received, of which four were added to the collection as skins, the rest as skulls.

Anous tenuirostris (Temm.). Two specimens, both prepared for the collection but one rather poor as the bird had been dead for some time: the first to reach the Museum from the Perth area since 1924.

Sterna dougalli Montagu. One fine specimen picked up on the Scarborough Beach is the first record for the Metropolitan Area, though the birds breed on the Abrolhos. The bill has the culmen peach red, the tip black, sides strawberry pink, lower mandible strawberry pink, extreme tip black. Feet grenadine (Ridgway), claws horn colour.

—L. GLAUERT, Museum, Perth, W.A., 2/8/39.

An Earlier Record of *Puffinus leptorhynchus*.—In going through my diary for 1917, when I visited the Upper Coongan and Port Hedland districts, I find a note which seems to point to the occurrence of the recently-described *Puffinus leptorhynchus*. On the homeward voyage after leaving Carnarvon I observed a number of petrels "brown above and white below" otherwise resembling *P. pacificus*. The latter breeds on islets within Shark Bay. At the same time I saw the usual *Pterodroma lessoni* skimming over the waves, so had a good opportunity to contrast the two species. This was on November 22 in the early morning. —F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury, W.A., 3/7/39.

Birds on a Dangin (W.A.) Farm.—During the past nine years I have made a number of visits to a wheat farm, five miles west of Dangin. Most of my visits, the longer ones in particular, have been made during summer. While at the farm I have usually taken part in the farm activities and, consequently, have had little time to devote to bird-study. I have, however, made a number of brief notes, and now submit a few observations. The country around Dangin is typical of the better portions of the Western Australian wheat-belt. Much land has been cleared, but a reasonable amount of cover remains at present. The principal forest trees are white gum and salmon gum. Dangin is one hundred miles east of Perth, and sixty-five miles south-west of Nangeenan, where I resided for some years.

I have noted only five species of birds at Dangin which I did not record at Nangeenan. They are the White-faced Heron (*Notophoïx novæ-hollandiæ*), Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), White-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudini*), Twenty-eight Parrot (*Barnardius zonarius* subsp.) and Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*). Probably the first two would have been added to my Nangeenan list (*Emu*, vol. XXXVII, p. 172) had I been able to keep under observation any of the few dams in the vicinity. The White-tailed Black Cockatoo does not appear to frequent the Nangeenan district, although it has been re-

corded at Kellerberrin, 30 miles farther west (C. H. F. Jenkins, *Emu,* vol. XXXI, p. 32). On the other hand I have no record of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*C. banksi*) at Dangin.

A few notes on individual species follow:—It has been stated that the Southern Stone Curlew (*Burhinus magnirostris*) very rarely flies when alarmed, but on more than one occasion I have flushed birds without difficulty. At Dangin I once disturbed a pair on the edge of a small patch of forest and they took flight almost immediately.

A nest of White-faced Herons (*Notophoÿx novæhollandiæ*) near one of the farm dams contained two young in September, 1937. Twenty-eight Parrots (*Barnardius zonarius* subsp.) at Dangin have, almost invariably, a russet frontal band. I took special note of thirteen dead birds and found eleven with frontal bands russet, or russet and vermilion, one bird with frontal band represented by one small russet feather only, and one bird with frontal band russet and yellow of fair extent. Several other birds which I examined without keeping a detailed record of the results had frontal bands russet rather than vermilion, whilst one lacked any frontal coloration. The abdominal region of these birds usually displays a good deal of yellow. At Nangeenan, I only once noted a bird with any suggestion of a red frontal band. I should think, therefore, that the Dangin birds would be designated Twenty-eight Parrots*, while the Nangeenan variety appears to be the Port Lincoln Parrot (*B.z. zonarius*) of the *Checklist.*

Apparently the Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*) was not generally known in the district until about 1922. The species is now common, especially in summer. When I first visited Dangin in 1929, Twenty-eight Parrots appeared to be more numerous than Regent Parrots, but for some years the position was reversed. This season (1938-39) the Twenty-eight Parrot seems to have suddenly regained its numerical superiority. Both these parrots are considered a pest in the fruit gardens which are a feature of most of the well-established farms. Without doubt, much damage is done by at least one of these species. I once saw a pear tree, which, incidentally, had been covered with wire netting, stripped of green pears. The pears had not been eaten, but near the stem of each were the marks of a Parrot's beak. These fruit trees and vines are visited morning and evening by bands of Twenty-eight Parrots and Regent Parrots. The only other bird which does appreciable damage in the orchards is the Dusky Miner (*Myzantha obscura*). Miners and Parrots are commonly destroyed despite the fact that the Miner is, presumably, a

*See Jenkins, "The Genus *Barnardius*," *Emu*, vol. xxx, p. 258. The form in this area would appear to be *B. z. woolundra*.—Ed.

protected bird. (The Game Act gives complete protection to "Honeyeaters" and also "Minahs"). I have seen Singing Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga virescens*) pecking at grapes which had been left on the vines and become sun-dried, but I have not observed those birds do any real damage.

I believe that the Mulga Parrot (*Psephotus varius*) occurs at Dangin, and have observed it near Quairading, four miles farther east. I have not seen this bird west of Dangin.

A nest of the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novæ-hollandiæ*) was found on January 11, 1935. It contained one egg and one nestling. The Pied Butcher-bird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*) is a fairly common species at Dangin. I saw two birds at Mawson 10 miles west of Dangin, but have seen none farther west. However, Mr. R. Benn, a member of the Union, tells me he has seen the Pied Butcher-bird at Northam. I have not recorded the Fairy Martin (*Hylochelidon ariel*) at Dangin, but in May, 1936, I came upon five old nests under an overhanging rock at Mt. Stirling, a great granitic outcrop 15 miles south of Kellerberrin. I revisited the spot later in the year, and early in 1937, but there were no new nests to be seen.

The following is a list of the birds recorded at Dangin:

Stubble Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*), Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*), Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*), Southern Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus magnirostris*), White-faced Heron (*Notophoyx novæ-hollandiæ*), Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), Brown Hawk (*Falco berigora*), Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*), White-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudini*), Galah (*Kakatoë roseicapilla*), Cockatiel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*), Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*), Western Rosella (*Platycercus icterotis*), Twenty-eight Parrot (*Barnardius zonarius* subsp.), Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Rainbow-bird (*Merops ornatus*), Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*), Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), Australian Tree-Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*), Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*), Willy Wagtail (*R. leucophrys*), Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*), Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*), Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novæ-hollandiæ*), White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*), White-fronted Chat (*Epthianura tricolor*), Western Warbler (*Gerygone fusca*), Brown Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*), Chestnut-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*), Yellow-tailed Thornbill (*A. chrysorrhoa*), Rufous Song-Lark (*Cinclorhamphus mathewsi*), Black-faced Wood-Swallow (*Artamus melanops*), Black-capped Sittella (*Neositta pileata*), Red-tipped Pardalote (*Pardalotus ornatus*), Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*), Brown Honeyeater (*Gliciphila indistincta*), Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*), Dusky Miner (*Myzantha obscura*), Red Wattle-bird (*Anthochæra carunculata*), Australian Pipit (*Anthus australis*), Australian Raven (*Corvus coronoides*), Pied Butcher-bird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*), Grey Butcher-bird (*C. torquatus*), Western Magpie (*Gymnorhina dorsalis*).

—ERIC SEDGWICK, Wellard, W.A.