

amongst newly-planted experimental plots. Dry seasons also caused Waterhens and ducks and Cape Barren Geese to invade settled areas adjacent to permanent water, and following Police reports 120 Cape Barren Geese and 32 Mountain Ducks, and 398 Emus were destroyed (1940-41). Similarly, during 1942-43, 300 Cape Barren Geese, 6 cranes (? *Notophox novæ-hollandiæ*), 29 Emus, 20 hawks, 72 Pelicans, 124 gulls, 20 Crested Pigeons, and 52 wild ducks were destroyed.

Dealers' Licences and Permits.—Latest published figures (1940-41): gun licences, 14,848; game licences, 441; dealers' permits, 7; permits (private owner of birds), 47. Conditions to take and keep animals and birds remain as before (see previous report *Emu*, 39, 1940, p. 192); 169 permits were issued. Recently a number of Orange-bellied Parrots (*Neophema chrysogaster*) have been trapped in the south-east of this State. Mr. Moorehouse informs me that no reliable records are kept of the number of individuals taken of each species (permits apparently being issued on the submitted *cash value* of the birds taken), and collectors are not required to furnish exact details of localities of where birds were taken. Trapping being a 'lucrative hobby,' trappers are naturally unwilling to reveal the source of many of their captures. This results in important records of distribution, from a scientific point of view, being lost.

H. T. CONDON, Branch Secretary.

Stray Feathers

A Note on Birds Affected by Heat.—A paper by Dr. J. B. Cleland recently published in the *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, XXIX, part 4, 1943, pp. 215-216, is of ornithological interest, dealing as it does with the effect of heat upon birds. As the paper is brief, it is reproduced (with permission) in its entirety.

REMARKABLE MISTRANSLATIONS IN THE ENGLISH VERSION (1809) OF PERON'S VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

By J. B. Cleland, M.D., Ch.M. (Member).

In 1809, two years after the first volume of *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes . . . sur les Corvettes Le Géographe, Le Naturaliste et le Goelette le Casuarina*, by F. Peron, was published, an English translation of it appeared. The publisher was Richard Phillips, Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London. The name of the translator is not given. On page 292 appears a quotation from Collins referring to the month of February, 1791, when the temperature at Sydney rose to 105° on the 10th and 11th. The account is in inverted commas. Amongst the disastrous effects of this heat wave, it is stated that:

In many parts of the port the land was covered with different species of birds, some just suffocated, and others absolutely reduced to charcoal by the heat, while several were seen to drop dead in their flight.

The incineration of some of the birds seemed to me so remarkable a statement to be made by such a sober narrator of events as Collins

that I naturally looked up his account to see what he had written. In *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (p. 111 in the reprint by Whitcombe and Tombs, 1910), the sentence runs:

In several parts of the harbour the ground was covered with different sorts of small birds, some dead, and others gasping for water.

Turning now to the original French of Peron, it was found that he had made a translation from Collins, and wrote: "Les uns déjà suffoqués, et les autres réduits aux abois par la chaleur." Looking up a French dictionary, I found that "abois" was given as "last shift, distress," and "aux bois" as "at bay, hard up"—a good rendering of the English. The phrase, however, seems to have been unknown to the English translator, possibly a penny-a-liner with little time at his disposal to look up the words. But he made a good shot at its meaning! A, privative; bois, wood; abois, not wood. What is not wood? Charcoal is not wood.

The birds must have been reduced to charcoal by the heat.

Another shot in the dark is in giving the colour of the under-side of the tail feathers of the black cockatoo of Tasmania. The English translation gives it as "bright blue," a colour unknown in our cockatoos. In the French (p. 246) it is "une belle couleur aurore." The dictionary gives for aurore "dawn, morning; East, gold-colour." Littler, in *A Handbook of the Birds of Tasmania* (p. 90), gives the colour of the (Yellow-tailed) Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*, Shaw) as "pale yellow, irregularly freckled with black."

—G. P. WHITLEY, Perth, W.A., 5/6/45.

Distribution of the Fleshy-footed Petrel.—In my notes on the Fleshy-footed Petrel (*Puffinus carneipes*) in *The Emu*, vol. 44, pt. 4, April 1945, pp. 241-8, I mentioned that the only record for the north Indian Ocean was a specimen collected in Ceylon, the locality being Panadure, 17 miles south of Colombo, and the year 1879 (Wait, W. E., *Manual Birds of Ceylon*, 1925, p. 419). Details of a second specimen, also from Ceylon, have recently been recorded by W. C. Osman Hill and Yvonne Burn (*Jnl. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, vol. 45, no. 2, April 1945, pp. 239-40): the bird was picked up dead on a beach near Mt. Lavinia on June 26, 1944, and is referred to the Western Australian breeding population, i.e. *P. c. carneipes*.

It is of interest to record also that in *The Auk* (vol. 62, no. 4, October 1945, pp. 626-7) there appears a summary of most of the records of the Fleshy-footed Petrel for North America. The author, Allen J. Duvall, is of the opinion that "... it perhaps is fairly regular in occurrence off the Pacific coast of the United States and Canada. . . ."—K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, N.S.W., 18/12/45.

An Early Note on *Pterodroma leucoptera* in Western Australia.—A small book entitled *Journals of several expeditions made in Western Australia during the years 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1832; under the Sanction of the Governor, Sir James Stirling, containing the latest authentic information relative to that country, accompanied by a map*, published in London in 1833, consists of reprints of articles which had appeared in various contemporary newspapers.

The *Journals*, which are actually in some cases in the

form of letters, cover trips made in Swan River Colony by Dr. J. B. Wilson, R.N., Ensign R. Dale, Lieut. Alexander Erskine, 63rd Regiment, Septimus Roe, Surveyor-General, and Surgeon Alexander Collie. There are a number of references to birds in the several Journals, but one is particularly interesting.

Being at the mouth of the King River, King George's Sound, on June 4, 1831, Collie wrote—"I took advantage of a boat going to Coffin Island to look for seals, mutton birds (sooty petrel, *procellaria fuliginosa*), to obtain a conveyance thither. It is an elliptical and rather low rocky island east of Mount Gardener. . . . The surface, a few yards removed from the cliffs, is composed of a thin covering of light loam and mould, producing the *Anthociras obovata*, and another shrub, with a few herbaceous plants, and affording a warren for sooty petrel, penguin, lizards, &c., which have riddled the ground with their holes, . . . [none of the party saw any seals] but the profusion of petrels amply compensated, as upwards of five hundred of these birds were caught by three persons in less than three days." The date, June 4, would rule out the Fleshy-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*) but fits the breeding date of *Pterodroma macroptera*.—H. M. WHITTELL, Bridgetown, W.A., 4/10/45.

The Type Specimen of *Pedionomus*.—At the meeting of the Zoological Society of London held on September 8, 1840, Gould described *Pedionomus torquatus*. Habitat—"The plains of the interior of South Australia." Fifteen months later, on February 8, 1842, he described, before the same society, what he considered to be another species, as *Pedionomus microurus*. Habitat—"Plains of the interior of South Australia."

By 1848, when the *Introduction to the Birds of Australia* was issued, Gould had discovered, through information given to him by Sir George Grey, that he had given two names to one and the same bird, and he records (pp. 92-93)—"Few of the discoveries I made in Australia interested me more than that of the species forming the subject of the present genus, and of which during my sojourn in the country I only obtained a male. Subsequently Mr. Strange sent me another example, which, from its much larger size and the circumstance of its neck being adorned with a beautiful collar of mingled black and white feathers, I considered a distinct species and characterized it as such, under the name of *P. torquatus*, and assigned that of *microurus* to the males or birds destitute of the collar, an error which the observations of Sir George Grey and Mr. Strange have enabled me to rectify. . . ." Gould then quotes from a letter from Grey, who wrote—"There is but one species; you have described two, *P. torquatus* and *P. micro-*

urus; the former is the female and the latter is the male." Gould continues—"The plate in the *Birds of Australia* therefore represents two females, and the appellation of *microurus* given to the male bird should be adopted. . . ." By 1865, however, Gould had recovered his balance and no longer considered that a name, because it had been given to a male, should be adopted in preference to one given previously to a female, and in the *Handbook* issued in that year he correctly uses the name *torquatus* for the species.

Thus Gould had two specimens in his possession before he named either. He himself obtained the male and Strange the female; yet, although Strange's bird was not obtained till later, he described it first. Therefore the type specimen of *Pedionomus torquatus* was collected in South Australia on some date prior to September 8, 1840, by Frederick Strange. Gould, in *Sturt's Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia, 1844-46, together with a Notice of the Province of South Australia in 1847, with ornithological notes by J. Gould, London, 2 vols. dated 1849, but which, fide G. M. Mathews, was issued in December 1848, refers to Pedionomus torquatus Gould in volume 2, Appendix, 46, as follows—"first discovered on the plains of Adelaide by Mr. Gould, where it appeared in considerable numbers in the year 1839-40. It was afterwards procured by a persevering collector in that Colony, Mr. Strange, who is now in Sydney."*—H. M. WHITTELL, *Bridgetown, W.A.*, 16/10/45.

Rufous Fantail in Tasmania.—A new record for Tasmania is reported by Miss Maude Leggett, at Stanley, on the north-west coast, where, on March 11, 1945, she saw a Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*). Possibly it was a wind-blown bird from Victoria. Miss Leggett says she and her father were attracted by the bird's call, with which, and also with the bird itself, she was quite familiar as the result of having heard and seen a good deal of the species in Victoria. They found it "flitting just under the green roof of a clump of tea-tree. Then it came to the branches of a ragged gum at the edge of the tea-tree, and we saw it quite well." During its migration, in autumn, the Rufous Fantail finds its way into unusual places, right out of its normal course. More than once it has been recorded in suburban areas in Melbourne and Sydney. I know of two instances where it has flown into city wash-houses in Melbourne. This seems to suggest that it strays from its course and perhaps for a time becomes lost. It is possible that if it does have difficulty in finding a course for its migration in the early stages, it may unwittingly go southwards, which would explain the Tasmanian occurrence if wind is not the explanation. Tasmania is freer of winds in autumn than in any other season.—MICHAEL SHARLAND, Hobart, Tas., 9/10/45.

Some Notes on Mimicry.—In *The Emu*, vol. 36, page 246, I stated that the Eastern Whipbird (*Psophodes olivaceus*) apparently mimicked the calls of only one other bird on any given occasion. More recent experience has shown the statement to be in need of revision.

On the morning of January 1, 1944, my attention was drawn to a curious medley of sounds near a bush track. Investigation revealed a Whipbird, in immature plumage, fossicking about an open patch. As though practising them, it repeated over and over again the calls of the Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*), Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) and Red-browed Tree-creeper (*Climacteris erythrops*), interspersed with a variety of its own calls. For several minutes I watched quietly; then the bird looked up saw me. It made off with an air which suggested it was 'ashamed' of having an audience.

During the following weeks another bird in immature plumage, in a different locality, gave several similar performances, mimicking chiefly the Grey-breasted Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) and Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*).

This leaves only the White-browed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis frontalis*) on my list as a mimic of only one call at a single 'rendering.' It usually utters the 'borrowed' call, followed by some of its own notes, from some prominent position, such as the top of a bush, and the accuracy of its mimicry is such that I have many times been deceived.

It is commonly asserted by bushmen that the Lyrebird (*Menura novæ-hollandiæ*) is an expert mimic of the sounds produced by bushmen, such as chopping, striking wedges with a mall, and sawing, etc. However, in seventeen years' experience of the birds here where I can hear them almost daily, and where there have always been bushworkers operating for many years past, I have never once heard one imitate anything other than natural sounds of the bush. I am convinced that the supposed chopping and sound of the mall are natural calls.

My most interesting experience of Lyrebird mimicry occurred on the morning of November 10, 1931. Extraordinary sounds emanating from about thirty feet up a tree, in a brush, caused me to investigate, and I found a young Lyrebird—I assumed it was one reared the previous year—attempting to imitate the laugh of a Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*). For about ten minutes it uttered laugh after laugh, with short breaks between. Some were fair reproductions, others were very poor. Then it uttered a few of its natural calls and 'planed' down into the scrub.

When I first began to take an interest in birds we owned a pair of Canaries for a few months. Shortly after their arrival snatches of Canary's song became a favourite item

of mimicry with the Grey-breasted Silvereyes in the surrounding orchard, and was also much used by two pairs of Yellow-throated Scrub-Wrens (*Sericornis lathamii*) in gullies adjoining the orchard. I could only just hear the Canaries from the haunts of one of these. Unfortunately I did not take note how long the 'Yellow-throats' continued to mimic the Canaries after they had gone, but it was certainly not very long. The Silvereyes about the orchard the following season had no hint of Canary song in their mimicry, but, of course, they were not necessarily the same birds.—ELLIS MCNAMARA, Mt. Kembla, N.S.W., 1/1/46.

A Note on the Powerful Owl.—On November 15, 1945, I came upon a family of the Powerful Owl—presumably a pair and a young bird. I was walking along the bed of a deep rocky gully when I disturbed the birds from their camp in a small lilly-pilly (*Eugenia australis* or *E. Luehmannii*).

The three birds flew in laboured flight for a little distance to thicker cover, and I noticed that one bird seemed a little smaller and slightly lighter in colour than the others. This bird was probably a young one of the winter brood.

I was rather surprised to see the male bird return to within a short distance from where I stood and take up a threatening attitude as though in defence of the other two. The dark face and breast and the heavily-barred underparts were observed before it moved off after the others. He gave a deep 'woop' call while near me and this was frequently heard after he had entered thicker cover with the others.

There was much 'white-wash' on the rocks below the camping tree and a well-grown young of the greater flying phalanger—sooty black with pure white below—minus its head, and the hindquarters of a silver-grey possum were found. These had probably been dropped by the birds as they left their perch.

Two other camping trees were found nearby showing evidence of much use—one a lilly-pilly, the other a red ash (local name)—I believe it is *Alphitonia excelsa*.

The type of country was not exactly what I would have expected as a habitation for the Powerful Owl other than that it was a deep rocky place. The bed of the gully had small patches of scrub trees, but the steeply sloping rocky walls were only moderately clad with bloodwoods, stringybarks, ironbarks and spotted gums.

A branch gully was heavily timbered with the same trees but lacked the scrubby patches. This gully seemed a more suitable place for the birds but I could find no evidence of its having been used by them.—E. A. R. LORD, Murphy's Creek, Qld., 25/11/45.