

Cracticus torquatus. Grey Butcher-bird.

-A comparatively rare species.

Gymnorhina tibicen. Black-backed Magpie.

Gymnorhina hypoleuca. White-backed Magpie.

Very common.

INTRODUCED SPECIES.

Streptopelia chinensis. Indian Turtle-Dove.

One bird appeared on the stable roof on October 1, 1948, but was not seen again. In view of the distance from any fixed habitat (Wangaratta, Benalla?) it is a most surprising record.

Turdus merula. Blackbird.

Common along the creeks and rivers of the district.

Passer domesticus. House Sparrow.

Sturnus vulgaris. Starling.

Very common.

Carduelis carduelis. Goldfinch.

Common. The first record from 1948 was September 25.

News from U.S.A.

Current news from the United States covers a number of interesting items.

Editorial Jubilee.—Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor has completed fifty years' editorship of the *National Geographic Magazine*. The magazine, like good wine, needs no bush. Though primarily dealing with lands and peoples, there has always been a thread of birds running through its pattern. Dr. Grosvenor, who, as a young man of 23, took over the editing in 1899, and who transformed the journal from one weighted heavily on the technical side to what it is now, has made birds one of his chief interests. A bulletin issued by the Society says "birds are the sure-fire subject to rouse his enthusiasm. He never tires of talking about them, individually or collectively".

Re-discovery of a Rare Bird.—A successful search has been made by Dr. Dillon Ripley for *Acanthoptila nepalensis*, the Spiny Babbler of Nepal, of which Dr. Brian Hodgson's four specimens presented to the British Museum in 1843, constituted the total of known specimens.

Dr. Ripley's 'expedition' collected more than 1,200 birds and over 100 other animal specimens. The ground covered in western and eastern Nepal was virgin territory with a remarkable variety of life because of the country's wide range of altitude and regional characteristics. Dr. Ripley believes that the Babbler that was the 'piece de resistance' of the collection is a distant relative of the American mockingbird—at least the bulletin claims. The specimen will be lodged with the Smithsonian Institution. Of the four specimens already known three are in the British Museum, and the fourth in the New York Museum of Natural History (by exchange).

Danger of Insecticides.—A 'news release' from the National Audubon Society urges caution in the use of insecticides in order to prevent widespread animal mortality. It deplores the fact that the attention they deserve is not given to repeated warnings by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Toxic agents such as DDT, chlorinated camphene and others, not only destroy birds and fish, but lead to destruction of bees and insects, valued by farmers and fruit-growers. Fertility of land may be affected.

Reduction of fifty per cent. or more in bird population of test areas has been ascertained following DDT dusting with 4.36 pounds per acre. Deaths of quail began on the eighth day with some, continuing up to 34 days with others. It is the slow action that is such an insidious factor in destruction, for the effect is to a great degree cumulative.

A great deal more experiment is necessary to establish the limitations and safety margins of these insecticides.

Practically all land birds are insectivorous in the nesting season, and that period largely agrees with the spraying season.

There are so many 'know-alls,' obstinate farmers, biased purveyors of materials and other opponents of common-sense and even of proved facts, that the fight against indiscriminate and unreserved use of insecticides needs support. The American investigators are certain of their facts but require further specific information. We might well take warning here.

American Ornithologists Union.—The sixty-seventh stated meeting will be held between October 10 and 14, at Buffalo, New York. Business sessions, field trips, and an annual dinner constitute parts of the proceedings. The Union has the good wishes of this, its equivalent society in Australia.

Stray Feathers

Another Introduced Bird making headway in Australia.—Although in early August 1947 it was reported to me that the Spotted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*) was occasionally noted in small flocks near Herne Bay, N.S.W., I had to wait until November 3 to observe my first 'wild' birds in Australia. This was at a place about six miles south of Brisbane. Messrs. J. Robertson and G. Barker have informed me that this bird can be noted in flocks of 20 to 30 about the river in Brisbane and suburbs at least eight miles away. Mr. Robertson has also recorded the breeding of these birds in Brisbane. Commonly known to the aviculturist as the Spice or Nutmeg Finch, this bird hails from Asia. It has a wide distribution, being found all over India and across to China and extending into the Malay Peninsula. It is a small brown finch with a light breast marked with