

*SUTTON—Acclimatization in South Australia.***Acclimatization in South Australia.**

By J. Sutton.

The following information with regard to the introduction of birds into South Australia is considered worthy of recording. The extracts from the newspapers, "The Register" and "The Advertiser," were given to me by Mr. C. T. Whiting, B.A., of the Public Library staff. The details with regard to Sparrows, 1868-1875, were taken from the diaries of the late M. Symonds Clark, of Burnside, S.A., a well-known aviculturist and ornithologist. The general information was obtained from the Annual Reports of the Acclimatisation Society of South Australia, which became later the Zoological and Acclimatization Society of South Australia.

With regard to the undermentioned sixteen species—*Black-bird (*Turdus merula*), Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Bunting (*Emberiza* sp.), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), *Indian Dove (*Streptopelia* sp.), *Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), *Greenfinch, green Linnet (*Chloris chloris*), Linnet (grey) (*Acanthis cannabina*), Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), Californian Quail (*Lophortyx californicus*). *Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Hedge Sparrow (*Pyrrhula modularis*), *House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), *Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*)—the seven marked with an asterisk have established themselves in this State. The Starling is the most numerous and the most abused by the orchardists and viticulturists, whilst it is welcomed by the lucerne growers. During the recent locust plague the Starling did yeoman service by attacking and eating the pests.

I have not yet been able to find out the species described as "Swan River Parrot"—evidently a Western Australian bird.

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Sparrows, etc.

"The Register," May 14, 1862, page 3, column 8.

Report of Adelaide Philosophical Society, 93rd monthly meeting, May 13.—"Mr. G. W. Francis was then called upon to read his paper 'On the Introduction and Acclimatization of Animals. . . .' He then proceeded to birds, 'and said the secretary,' the swallow, the water-wagtail, the titmouse, and the house sparrow were likely to be very useful in destroying the insects which pestered the fields and gardens. Then pheasants, ducks, geese, pigeons, and many other birds might be introduced as birds of ornament. . . ."

"The Advertiser," July 14, 1863.

We learn that the "Orient" brought . . . "There are also a variety of English songbirds imported for private speculation. Mr. Charles Goode, of the firm of Goode Brothers, and one of the passengers by the 'Orient,' purchased some larks, thrushes, and other birds when in England, with a view of letting them free in the colony, but most of them unfortunately died on the passage."

"The Advertiser," Tuesday, July 21, 1863, page 4, column 1.

Auction. This Day (Tuesday) July 21, at 11 o'clock,
Exchange Auction Mart,
ex Orient.

Parr and Luxmoore will sell, under instructions from Captain Harris:—

Gold Fish, Fancy Rabbits (lop ears and others), Carrier and White Pouter Pigeons, Blackbirds, Canaries, Linnets, and Sparrows.

"The Advertiser," July 22, 1863, page 2, column 4.

Topics of the Day.—An unusual crowd of persons assembled on Tuesday in Parr and Luxmoore's salerooms, attracted chiefly by the announcement that the birds, etc., brought out in the "Orient" would be submitted to public competition. They fetched in many instances very high prices. An English sparrow, without his cage, fetched 11s., rather a high price for a sparrow, although, as it is the sole survivor of 100 shipped by the importer, it will be rather dear to the buyer than profitable to the seller. A couple of blackbirds sold for 68s., a goldfinch-canary for 35s., and other birds fetched high prices. Swan.

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River parrots sold for 30s. each. People at home will be astounded when they hear of the prices which such-to them-common birds as sparrows and blackbirds realised in South Australia. Mr. Parr dwelt facetiously upon the qualities of sparrows, considered as the Farmers' Friend, although as the sparrow he sold was warranted to be the "only one in the colony," it is difficult to see how the race of sparrows is to be thereby introduced. A smaller difficulty presents itself with regard to the blackbirds, which, the fortunate purchaser was assured, were both cocks!"

"*The Register*," July 21, 1865, page 2, column 5.

"Sparrows.—Last year Captain Harris, of the 'Orient,' augmented the collection at the Gardens by presenting a badger and a bear; but this trip he has brought a lot of English house sparrows, which are to be handed over to the care of Mr. Francis. The importance of sparrows in destroying many of the worms and insects destructive to the growing corn was the inducement which prompted the captain to purchase a cage of healthy birds for acclimatization, and he has, by very great care and attention, managed to bring about one-third of them in excellent order."

Sparrows, from the Diaries of M. Symonds Clark, "Hazelwood," Burnside.

3rd September, 1868.—Thos. Slape told me that he had seen some English sparrows at Magill which had a nest against a house there. This is the first instance I have heard of these birds being acclimatized (in a wild state) in the neighbourhood of Adelaide, though I believe there are some about at Mt. Gambier, and there are many near Melbourne.

5th January, 1874.—On my way to and from Melbourne from 23rd to 31st December. . . . In Mount Gambier township I saw hundreds of English Sparrows.

28th October, 1875.—. . . To-day I saw two English Sparrows in the road opposite Hazelwood. I do not think I had before seen any nearer than Mrs. Ferguson's, a full mile distant, though during the past year or two I have seen numbers there, as in the neighbourhood of Norwood.

12th November, 1875.—A day or two ago I thought I heard English Sparrows about the loquat tree here, and to-day Allen said there had been some about there, though he had not seen any here before.

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Acclimatization Society of South Australia. Established July 23, 1878.

First Annual Report, October 17, 1879.—On the 12th December, 1878, it was resolved that the birds purchased by Mr. H. Scott be taken over and become the property of the Society. It was resolved that Dr. Schomburgk, Messrs. Abrahams and Minchin be empowered to obtain tenders and erect a suitable aviary in the Botanic Gardens for the Society's use. Dr. Schomburgk's offer to take charge of birds, etc., in the Society's aviary, conditional that Society paid all costs and charges for food, was accepted with thanks. It was resolved that Messrs. Schomburgk, Sanderson, and the Hon. Secretary be authorised to purchase suitable birds for the Society. A letter was received from Mr. Gordon Hale, of Wilmington, relative to the importation of useful birds from the Mauritius. £5 5s. was authorised to be expended in the purchase of the Martin birds from the Mauritius. The birds purchased by the Secretary (in Melbourne) were eighteen Skylarks, three Thrushes; and one Blackbird. It was resolved that Dr. Wyatt and Mr. Hamilton should prepare a list of animals and birds desirable to be introduced by the Society. The Hon. H. Scott, Mr. Hamilton, and the Hon. Secretary were appointed as a Sub-Committee for purchasing animals and birds for the Society. Twenty-two pairs of larks were received from New Zealand and distributed in suitable localities. The Hon. Secretary was authorised to liberate some of the finches recently purchased by the Council. The Hon. Secretary reported five pairs of bullfinches had been liberated in Mr. Scott's grounds at Mount Lofty. 12th September, 1879.—The Hon. Secretary reported . . . that seven pairs of greenfinches had been sent to Sir John Morphett to be liberated on his grounds. The Hon. Secretary further reported that ten pairs of skylarks recently purchased in Melbourne had been liberated near Enfield—all the birds were in excellent condition. A letter was received from Captain Harry, of the "Hesperus," expressing his willingness to assist the Society by bringing to the colony English song and other birds. A letter was read from the Forest Board giving the Society permission to liberate birds and fish in Government land and water reserves.

The Chief Justice, S. J. Way, Esq., said . . . "The South Australian Acclimatization Society was formed mainly to promote the introduction and acclimatizing of suitable birds and fish into the colony; and perhaps he might be allowed to

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mention one fact that was of considerable importance. At any of the meetings of the Council, when it was suggested that birds of any kind should be introduced, the first question which occupied the attention of the members was to consider if the birds proposed would be likely to do mischief to gardeners and farmers. (Hear, hear). If any kind of birds was pronounced to be likely to be injurious to growers and cultivators a veto was put upon its introduction at once. It was very far from the wish of the Society to bring out birds from other countries which could in any way prove an annoyance or nuisance to any class of the community, and it was as well that should be thoroughly understood. . . .”

Appendix A.

The following is a list of Birds, etc., purchased by the Society:—

September 26th, 1878.—9 Thrushes, 7 Blackbirds (3 died), 11 Goldfinches and Linnets (6 died).

October 2nd, 1878.—1 pair of Californian Quail.

May 20th, 1879.—18 Skylarks, 3 Thrushes (1 died).

June 10th, 1879.—1 Thrush.

July 8th, 1879.—32 pairs of Skylarks (9½ died).

July 11th, 1879.—17 Bullfinches (3 died).

August 5th, 1879.—5 Goldfinches (2 died), 16 Chaffinches (14 died), 5 Bramble Finches, 2 Bullfinches, 6 Grey Linnets, 20 Green Linnets.

September 9th, 1879.—10 pairs of Skylarks (all set free).

Appendix B.—Distribution.

1 pair Golden Pheasants in aviary at Gardens.

1 pair China Geese at G. W. Goyder's, Echunga.

1 pair India Ducks at G. W. Goyder's, Echunga.

9 English Thrushes (5 died), 4 liberated at Mount Lofty.

7 Blackbirds (3 died), 2 liberated at Mount Lofty, 2 in aviary at Gardens.

11 Goldfinches and Linnets (6 died), 5 liberated at North Adelaide.

1 pair Californian Quail liberated at Pewsey Vale.

18 Skylarks liberated on Park Lands and Enfield.

3 Thrushes (1 died), 1 in aviary, Botanic Gardens, 1 A. Abraham's.

1 Blackbird in Botanic Garden Aviary.

22 pair Skylarks liberated at Dry Creek.

14 English Bullfinches liberated at Mount Lofty (3 died).
3 in Botanic Garden Aviary.

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7 pair Greenfinches liberated near Cummins's*[†]; 2 pair Mr. F. J. Sanderson's; remainder in North Adelaide aviary.

9 pair Skylarks liberated near Enfield; 1 pair in North Adelaide aviary.

Second Annual Report, 22nd October, 1880.—The operations of the Society have continued to be directed to the introduction of fresh-water fish and useful birds, and to the preservation of fish and birds, both native and imported. In continuation of their operations in 1878-79, during the last twelve months the Council have imported and set free in various localities on the plains and in the hills English thrushes, skylarks, goldfinches, and other song and insectivorous birds. Reports continually reach the Council of these birds having been seen and heard in different places, and there is every reason to hope that they are being permanently established in the colony. It is the intention of the Council to continue to import and set loose English black-birds, starlings, and other insectivorous birds which have been ascertained to be beneficial and in no way injurious to gardens and farms. This is a branch of the Society's work of which the advantages may be shared in all parts of the colony, and as to which the Council will gladly co-operate with subscribers in any locality. The acknowledgements of the Society are due to . . . Mr. Brown, the Conservator of Forests, and his assistants, for liberating and protecting imported birds. . . Mr. Onward Bates, lately here on a visit from America, has kindly offered to procure for the Society a supply of Virginian quail.

The Chief Justice (President) S. J. Way, Esq., said . . . "He also instanced the case of New Zealand, where English song birds had been so successfully acclimatized that this Society had actually found it cheaper to obtain song birds from that colony than to send to England for them. He acknowledged the valuable services of Mr. Randell, of Gumeracha, who had introduced partridges in that district, and spoke in terms of praise of Messrs. Everard and Gilbert for introducing deer into the colony, and of the Hon. H. Scott, M.L.C., for introducing a large number of English song birds in the neighborhood of Mount Lofty. In doing so he pointed out that this work of acclimatization should not be left to the isolated efforts of individuals, but that the public should come forward and give it their liberal support. This Society had now been in existence

* Sir John Morphett's homestead.

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for two years, and he hoped that in the course of a few years longer the results of its labors would be such that the residents of Adelaide would be able to experience the delights of trout-fishing in the various streams in the vicinity, and that the groves would be filled with song-birds. . . .”

Mr. Commissioner Hamilton suggested that the name of Mr. Benjamin Rounsevell should be joined to those mentioned by the Chairman as prominently associated with the introduction of partridges into the colony. This suggestion was cordially adopted.

Mr. Ross . . . spoke of the necessity for protecting the birds that had been acclimatized. The bronze-winged pigeons, which used to be plentiful in the hills, had sadly diminished in numbers, till now there were scarcely any left. This was owing in a great measure to the incursions of people from Adelaide, who amused themselves by shooting them. He had personally done all he could to stop this practice, and it was a matter which demanded attention. . . .

Statement of . . . Birds Purchased and Distributed During the Year.

The following birds have been liberated during the past year:—147 Skylarks, 78 Bramblings, 43 Goldfinches, 20 Thrushes, 3 Chaffinches.

In the Society's aviaries there are at present 5 Californian Quail, 2 Golden Pheasants, 2 Blackbirds, 5 Goldfinches, 2 Thrushes, 3 Chaffinches, 3 Buntings.

Mr. Sanderson having been very successful in rearing English song birds, the following were sent to his aviary in North Adelaide:—2 Bullfinches, 4 Goldfinches, 3 Green Linnets, 2 Bramblings, 1 Chaffinch.

In Mr. Goyder's charge on the Onkaparinga are 1 pair China Geese and 1 pair India Ducks.

Third Annual Report of the South Australian Acclimatization and Zoological Society. . 4th November, 1881.—The work during the year has been amongst other things that of introducing the songsters and insect-destroying birds of the mother-country, so well known to many members in their younger days, with the hope that they may be permanently established here, and impart to our somewhat unmelodious hills and woods the music and harmony of English country life. Some misapprehension respecting the introduction of the house sparrow has

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been entertained by the public, and it may be as well to repeat what has been frequently stated that the common house sparrow had been imported into the colony before the Acclimatization Society was in existence. The same misunderstanding has been entertained with respect to the rabbits; but the Society is not responsible for the presence of these pests, or for the ravages they committed. The rabbits were turned out on our lands by private individuals. The object the Society has in view is simply that of bringing into the country all birds, fish, and animals which would be beneficial in many ways to the residents in the colony. To this end the Society has worked from the commencement of its existence up to the present time. A number of goldfinches, starlings, blackbirds, and skylarks have been liberated in various places, including amongst these the Botanic Gardens, Torrens Park, Black Hill, Fullarton, Beaumont, Kapunda, and the South-East. In Torrens Park Mr. Barr Smith has seen young blackbirds; and goldfinches now beautify the hedgerows of Unley and Burnside. The acknowledgments of the Society are due . . . to Captain Harry, of the ship "Hesperus," for his gift of song birds. . . .

His Excellency (the Governor, Sir W. F. D. Jervois) said . . . He confessed that there was one paragraph in the report which he read with considerable pleasure, although he had been previously acquainted with the fact, namely, that the Society was not responsible for the introduction of sparrows and rabbits. Whatever might be the merits or demerits of the sparrow or the rabbit in their special places, he must confess that at one time he had an incorrect idea that the Acclimatization Society had been responsible for their introduction, and it was most gratifying to find that those who attacked their existence had so good a defence to make. He supposed there could be no doubt about the advisability of introducing the song birds, which had been referred to in the report into our hills; and living as he did for some months in the year in the hills, he could certify that it would be a most agreeable addendum to have the melodious songs of the song birds rather than the somewhat discordant notes of the laughing jackass (Laughter).

The Chief Justice (S. J. Way, Esq.) said . . . With respect to the introduction of birds, he might state that members of a party at the lower reach of the Onkaparinga had gone to the bed of the river last Sunday, and had had the pleasure of hearing the English thrush, indicating that even at that distance

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the birds introduced by the Society had been successfully acclimatized. . . .

A Statement of Birds . . . purchased and distributed during the Year 1880-1881.

20 Indian Doves, Botanic Gardens; 15 Blackbirds, Beaumont; 30 Goldfinches, Fullarton; 45 Starlings, Torrens Park; 30 Blackbirds, Torrens Park; 44 Starlings, Black Hill; 50 Goldfinches, Botanic Gardens; 30 Goldfinches, Torrens Park; 36 Skylarks, Kapunda; 9 Toulouse Geese, Mr. Goyder.

Gifts from Melbourne Society.

10 Pheasants—5 Golden, 5 Silver; 20 Indian Doves; 4 Carolina Ducks.

Fourth Annual Meeting, November 10, 1882.—R. E. Minchin's report:— . . . With the assistance of the Acclimatization Society in Canterbury, New Zealand, the Council is obtaining another supply of song birds, which is daily expected to arrive. A number of goldfinches and other birds have been set at liberty in the following localities:—Hill River, Yallum Park (South-East), on the Hindmarsh River, Ashford, Warrakilla, Fourth Creek, Torrens Park, and Katlunga. . . .

His Excellency (the Governor, Sir W. F. D. Jervois) said . . . I am glad to see, too, that active steps for the introduction of song birds into our woods are being taken. I am sure every one who lives in the hills, as I do during a great portion of the year, will highly appreciate this department of the operations of the Society. . . .

The Chief Justice (S. J. Way, Esq.) said . . . As to song-birds, towards the end of last year he himself turned out in the neighborhood of Mintaro some goldfinches and two or three hedge-sparrows. The goldfinches had been seen and heard several times since; but it was thought that the sparrows had died off. The other day, however, visiting the locality with Professor Tate, they had both seen and heard the homely hedge-sparrow.

The Hon. R. D. Ross . . . In their acclimatization of song birds he would point out the wisdom of the Society placing the various birds in localities where they could readily get the food they naturally took. The goldfinch, for instance, was exceedingly fond of the Scotch and variegated thistles, and, of course, should be liberated where these were most abundant.

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Mr Curnow . . . He wished to warn the Society against introducing blackbirds, for in Cornwall they were very destructive to gooseberries and apples, and might also be to grapes here.

Fifth Annual Meeting, 21st December, 1883.—The Chief Justice (S. J. Way, Esq.) . . . but though they had done nothing in the way of acclimatizing birds and fish this year, they had not lost sight of the work, and hoped to report next year that they had further stocked the streams in the colony with trout and the woods with birds.

Sixth Annual Meeting, 19th December, 1884.—Report . . . larks, goldfinches, and other English song birds have been seen and heard in various localities.

Hon. R. D. Ross . . . The blackbird and thrush had also been introduced during His Excellency's (Sir W. F. C. Robinson) administration.

Seventh Annual Meeting, 11th December, 1885. Report . . . The Council have to record their thanks to Sir George Grey, K.C.B., of New Zealand, former Governor of South Australia, for his valuable presentation to the Society of a number of Californian Quail. These have arrived safely, and are doing well, and it is proposed to liberate them at a suitable time.

The Hon. R. D. Ross . . . He hoped the Society would take into consideration the acclimatization of the Californian quail, for which bird this climate was well suited. In California the bird was as common about the houses as domestic fowls. It would be a most desirable bird to introduce here. As for the blackbird, he believed, they were getting pretty numerous here, and he might remark that no bird was more destructive to cherries than the blackbird; but it did its work completely, unlike the silvereye*, which damaged more than it consumed. The blackbird ate the cherry completely, leaving only the stone, and, therefore, the extent of its mischief could be seen.

Eighth Annual Meeting, 22nd December, 1886.—Sir R. D. Ross . . . He would be glad if the Society could get Californian quail introduced into the colony, as they would no

* *Zosterops halmaturina.*

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doubt do very well, and provide good sport as well as a new dish for the table. The bird was very nearly as large as the English partridge, and was quite capable of holding its own against animals that might prey upon it. Blackbirds were multiplying to a very large extent in the colony, and he believed they would become a greater source of trouble than the sparrows, but they could be tolerated, because they afforded sport, and were much appreciated upon the table. Strangely enough, the song of the blackbird, as heard in the old country, was never heard here. The birds could utter the same shrill sharp cry of alarm, and also a few other notes, but when it came to the more elaborate system of singing they seemed deficient. Perhaps they were incapable of singing, because they had not heard the notes of the older birds. It would be well worth while to enquire into the subject, because it might open up a wide field for investigation. He had noticed that the birds seemed to be trying hard to sing, and thereby evinced a latent power, which needed developing. . . .

His Excellency (the Governor, Sir W. F. C. Robinson) . . . Incidentally he mentioned that he believed blackbirds did not sing here because they had not the opportunity, as they had at home, of hearing the parent birds sing.

From the Report.—Additions to the stock were . . . thirty Californian quail, presented by Sir George Grey, K.C.B., of New Zealand, in addition to his former gift of similar birds.

Fifteenth Annual Meeting, 21st July, 1893.—Mr. J. Fisher . . . It might interest them to know, although he did not wish to be egotistical, that the establishment of the Society was due to Messrs. Sanderson, Hodgkiss, and Souttar, the late Director, and himself, who for a start agreed to contribute five guineas apiece for captains of sailing vessels to bring birds, such as thrushes, blackbirds, and skylarks, from England. The result was the formation of this Society.

Seventeenth Annual Meeting, 12th July, 1895.—His Excellency (the Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. S. J. Way) . . . Sparrows, rabbits, and other pests had been introduced into the colony, and the fox seemed to be fast pressing on our boundaries, but none of them were to be debited to the Acclimatisation Society of South Australia. (Applause). . . .

Nineteenth Annual Meeting, 26th July, 1897.—His Excellency (the Governor, Sir Thomas Powell Buxton, Bart., K.C.M.G.)

. When travelling in the comparatively far north he had observed that there was an absence of kangaroo life. The same sort of thing struck him in travelling up and down the River Murray. He could not help noting the very zealous desire to shoot the shags and everything. The cormorant, the ibis, spoonbill, and heron all seemed to come under the name of shags. His firm conviction was (and he thought science would bear him out) that the contention that the shags killed all the fish was not a correct view. The fish and the shags were indeed dependent upon each other. The fish depended upon the shags and the latter upon the fish. The shags had their use in removing the weaker fish.

Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting, 17th July, 1903.—The President (Henry Scott, Esq.)

It may be interesting to you to have some little account of the history of the Society since it was established on July 23, 1878. Prior to that several gentlemen had been importing a few birds and animals on their own account, notably the late Sir Thomas Elder, Mr. Joseph Fisher, Mr. W. J. Magarey, the late F. J. Sanderson, and several others.

