

An Ornithological "Gem"!

By J. Sutton.

The following extract appeared in an article in "The Overseas"; the monthly journal of the Over-Seas League (London), Volume XXI., December, 1936, pp. 31-34, entitled "*A Naturalist among the South Australian Lagoons*," by Dr. Geoffrey Morey:—
"There can be no more interesting or delightful holiday than to spend a week or two among the South Australian lagoons, which for the most part are the swamps and the backwaters of the River Murray. Equipped with a small boat, a reflex camera and fishing lines, I started off alone to study the wild life in these great swamps, and for ten days I knew not a lonely or a dull

moment. Now and then, in the grey half light—just before the sun has risen—one may hear the call of the big emu-like cassowary as he goes dashing through the bush in search of his mate. Once I was fortunate enough to see the bird fishing. He was standing in the middle of a swamp, which was about three feet deep, with the feathers spread out as far as his short wing-like structures would allow. After remaining in this position, for nearly a quarter of an hour, he waded to the bank and shook out all sorts of small fish and insects, which had been deceived by his trick and had taken him for a large water plant.”

The Cassowary is an inhabitant of North-Eastern Queensland as far down as Cardwell. I referred the above extract to Mr. F. L. Berney, of “Barcarolle,” Longreach, Q., and in reply he stated:—“. . . It is astonishing. Had the writer said that he had been *told* what he described one could have forgiven him on account of his having had his leg pulled; when he says he *saw* the Cassowary in South Australia and describes a most extraordinary incident, action of the bird, one can only imagine he is trying to outdo de Rougemont. The whole statement, I’m afraid, is pure fairy tale—imagination.”

The Emu (*Dromaius novae-hollandiae*) is in South Australia, but has never been known to act in the manner stated, and although it can swim well, fish and insects do not form part of its diet. I agree with Mr. Berney’s remarks on the extract. There are other details in the article which can be questioned.
