

The Ages of Birds.

An account which should prove of great interest to all students of birds has appeared in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London, Vol. 108, p. 195, July, 1938, and is entitled "Further Notes on the Duration of Life in Animals—IV, Birds," by Major S. S. Flower, O.B.E., F.L.S., F.Z.S. In it is given a summary of the details collected "of the duration of life of 5,535 individual birds, representing 1,294 species (including subspecies formerly considered as full species), known to have lived for six or more years." References to Australian species are numerous, and these have been extracted for the benefit of our readers who may not have access to the original publication.

"Australian Crow, or Raven, *Corvus coronoides*.

On 14 October, 1937, one was still living in the N.Z.P.
°Washington, D.C., after 21 years 10 months 14 days.

Grey Bullfinch-Jay, *Struthidea cinerea*.

An Australian Apostle Bird, that was living in the Berlin Zoological Garden in 1894, was said to have been there for 25 years.

White-winged Chough, *Corcorax melanorhamphus*.

In the old Hamburg Zoological Gardens one of these Australian birds is known to have lived 16 years 4 months 19 days, and perhaps longer.

Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Twenty birds of this species average 9 years; 4, of the 20, left alive. The maximum recorded for a Starling in captivity is 17 years, and for a ringed specimen 15 years 10 months.

Laniidae.

. . . though we know little about the true Shrikes, there is a fair amount of available data concerning the Australian genus *Gymnorhina* which was formerly included in the family Corvidae. Twenty of these Piping Crows show an average life of 11 years 8 months; 2, of the 20, being left alive.

Alcedinidae.

Twenty of the large Kingfishers of the genus *Dacelo* give an average life in captivity of 8 years 8 months; 4, of the 20, being left alive. The maximum life of an Australian Laughing Kingfisher or "Kookaburra," *Dacelo gigas*, in London being 11/9/1922-7/7/1936, 13 years 9 months 26 days.

Psittaciformes.

Twenty Australian Parrakeets of the genus *Platycercus* average 13 years 2 months; 4, of the 20, being left alive.

Twenty Budgerigars, *Melopsittacus undulatus*, show an average of 9 years 2 months; 8, of the 20, being left alive. The oldest cock appears to have lived to 21 years, and the oldest hen to 19 years.

A Banksian Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus banksii*, received in the London Zoological Gardens 9/6/1908, was still living there 2/10/1937, after 29 years 3 months 23 days.

Twenty Cockatoos, of moderately certain authenticity, of the genus *Kakatoe* average 30 years 9½ months; 9, of the 20, being left alive.

Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, *Kakatoe galerita*.

Twenty individuals of this species show an average of 22 years 6 months; 12, of the 20, being left alive.

The first bird to be received for the National Zoological Park, Washington, D.C., was one of these Cockatoos, "which had spent five years in the home of a Maryland family before

it was presented to the National Collection. . . . From all observations it is still (1st February, 1929, age at least 43 or 44 years) a young, healthy bird in good plumage, and can hold its own squawking with any bird in the parrot room" (Mann, 1930, pp. 252, 323, and photograph on pl. 3 opposite p. 6).

The individual received in the London Z.G. 31/5/1907, which died 4/9/1936, after 29 years 3 months 4 days, was said to have been 40 years old on arrival, so its reputed age at death was 69 years. Mr. Charles L. Barrett, C.M.Z.S., in a letter of 8 Dec. 1926 from Elsternwick, Victoria, Australia, sent me a photograph, taken by himself, of a *Kakatoe galerita* "still living at the age, approximately, of 56 years"; he has been in his owner's possession for that period, and was full-grown, but young, when obtained. He shows hardly a sign of old age. In the same letter Barrett mentions another individual bird "still living and in fairly good condition (!—Eds.) owned by a man in Adelaide, who has given me the bird's history from the time it was taken from the nest. This bird is more than 80 years old." Then there is the well-known "Cocky Bennett," a cockatoo owned by a hotelkeeper at Tom Ugly's Point, Sydney, which died in 1916, at the reputed age of 120 years. In English and foreign periodicals photographs of this bird keep on appearing showing it practically devoid of feathers and with an enormously long overgrown beak; incidentally neither of these features are proofs of old age, but of disease and neglect. Kinghorn (1930) has written of this bird, "Its authentic history, other than hearsay, amounted to about 26 years old only."

Leadbeater's Cockatoo, *Kakatoe leadbeateri*.

One, said to have been a young bird in 1895, was presented to the Zoological Gardens in London in April, 1922. In August, 1937, it was living at Whipsnade at the probable age of about 42 years.

Roseate Cockatoo, or Galah, *Kakatoe roseicapilla*.

Twenty birds average 15 years 10 months; 13, of the 20, being left alive. One living in the N.Z.P., Washington, D.C., on 1/2/1929, had been there 26 years 3 months. Mr. J. R. Kinghorn, C.M.Z.S., has recorded (1930) that he knew a hen Galah that in her thirtieth year laid an egg and died, and another Galah that came into the possession of the Australian Museum in 1924, which was reputed to have lived in captivity for 47 years.

The Slender-billed Cockatoos, *Licmetis tenuirostris tenuirostris* and *Licmetis tenuirostris pastinator*, are noted for their longevity in captivity. Twenty birds average 18 years 8 months; 11, of the 20, being left alive. One presented to the London Z.G., 29/1/1937, was said to be 85 years old.

Cockatiel, *Leptolophus hollandicus* (*Calopsittacus novae-hollandiae*).—Twenty Cockatiel average 11 years 2½ months; 8, of the 20, being left alive. The maximum life of a Cockatiel is 24, or perhaps 27, years, according to Mr. D. Seth-Smith, F.Z.S. (Avic. Mag. ser. 4, 10, 1932, p. 113).

Acciptriformes.

An Australian Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Uroaetus audax*, living in the N.Z.P., Washington, D.C., 14/10/1937, has been there already 26½ years.

Twenty Eagles of the genus *Haliaeetus* average 22½ years; 4, of the 20, being left alive.

Twenty Kites, of the genus *Milvus*, average 20 years 7 months; 7, of the 20, being left alive.

Twenty Falcons average 10 years 4 months; 4, of the 20, being left alive.

Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

The pair of Cormorants received in 1921 in St. James' Park, London, have been a great success; in several different years they have nested and reared young. The old pair lived for 15 years, probably for longer. A ringed British Cormorant of 14 years is on record, and another of 18 years 2½ months.

Black Swan, *Chenopsis atrata*.

The longest record in London is of a bird presented to the Society in 1827, which died 30/4/1847, approximately 20 years.

Twenty Cape Barren Geese, *Cereopsis n. hollandiae*, average 11 years 6 months; 10, of the 20, being left alive.

One presented by King William IV to our Society 1/10/1830, lived till 11/8/1847, 16 years 10 months 11 days.

A gander presented to the New York Zoological Society 6/8/1909 is still living in their park 29/9/1937, after 28 years 1 month 23 days.

Heron, *Ardea cinerea*.

The late Mr. John R. B. Masefield, in a letter of 21/8/1926, told me that a Heron he had ringed (28/5/1910) near Cheadle, Staffordshire, was shot (27/2/1926) after 15 years 9 months.

An Australian Crane, *M. rubicunda*, living at Washington, D.C., 14/10/1937, has been there already over 33 years.

Australian Bustard, *Choriotis australis*.

A male received in the Adelaide Z.G. 29/5/1922, was still alive 27/10/1937, after 15 years 4 months 28 days.*

Australian Stone-Curlew, *Burhinus magnirostris*.

"In Rockdale, a suburb of Sydney, an old resident of the district . . . keeps a fine specimen of a Stone-Curlew, which readily answers to the name of "Curly." Towards the end of this year (1934) he will celebrate his twenty-ninth birthday." . . . Anon., Proc. Roy. Soc. Zool., N.S.W., 1933-34, 21.

Silver Gull, *Larus novae-hollandiae*.

Average age of twenty oldest individuals 11 years 4 months; 13, out of 20, being left alive.

Pacific Gull, *Gabianus pacificus*.

London Z.G., 13/4/1922-16/10/1936, 14 years 6 months 3 days.

Emu, *Dromicicus n. hollandiae*.

1. Twenty Emus average 20 years 2 months; 4, of the 20, being left alive.

2. Emus were bred in captivity in England early in the 19th century, both in the Royal collection at Windsor and in that of the Marquis of Hertford at Ragley (E. T. Bennett, 1831-2, p. 200). One of the Windsor Emus presented by H.M. King William IV to the Zoological Society of London 1/9/1830, lived in Regent's Park till 5/4/1847, 16 years 7 months 4 days. A period only surpassed in London by the bird purchased 17/11/1910, which died 14/2/1929, 18 years 2 months 27 days.

3. Two instances of long-lived Emus in America are:—New York, 7/7/1911 to 21/8/1935, 24 years 1 month 14 days, and Washington, where an Emu was still alive after 25 years 11 months.

4. The late Lord Rothschild's Emus have been a feature of Tring Park for many years. I saw them first in the summer of 1891. According to Joseph Whitaker (1851-1932), in his book on the Deer-Parks of England (1892, p. 77), there were about that date in Tring Park of 350 acres, 60 fallow deer, 25 kangaroos, 14 emus, 8 rheas, and 70 wild geese of nine different species. A male bird at Tring, hatched there in 1908, died through an accident in 1936, at the age of about 28 years.

* This bird has since died on 30th November, 1938.—Eds.

Lord Rothschild told me, 6/3/1926, that he knew of a pair of Emus, in France, still breeding at the age of 40 years; this pair are not included in the average given above."

The above extracts from the paper by Major Flower supplement notes given in two previous papers (P.Z.S., 1925, pp. 1365-1422, pub. 14th January, 1926, and Bull. Brit. Ornith. Club, London, 52, No. 355, December, 1931, pp. 45-52), to which those desirous of further data on this subject are referred.

Records of ages of Parrots and Cockatoos in the South Australian Museum are as follows:—

White Cockatoo, *Kakatoe galerita*.

B. 17138, male, died in captivity 25/12/1933, over 30 years, M. Casement.

Little Corella, *Kakatoe sanguinea*.

B. 11868, male, died in captivity 10/10/1929, 39 years old, H. E. Hewett.

B. 17112, male, died in captivity 8/12/1933, obtained as a fledgling from Cockburn, N.S.W., aged 15 years, E. A. Wood.

Corella, *Kakatoe tenuirostris*.

B. 17758, male, died in captivity 6/2/1935, aged 44 years; was hatched in the Spring of 1891, in Murrumbidgee district, N.S.W., A. McLellan.

Regent Parrot, *Polytelis anthopeplus*.

B. 6911, male, died in captivity 8/9/1926; purchased from a bird dealer in 1891; it thus lived in captivity for 35 years.

Princess Parrot, *Polytelis alexandrae*.

B. 14824, female, died in captivity 13/7/1931, aged about 20 years, E. Whittington.

B. 15354, male, died in captivity 5/5/1932, aged 10-12 years, E. Kyffin Thomas.

B. 17450, female, died 18/6/1934, aged 8-9 years, S. Harvey.

B. 17800, male, died 28/3/1935, aged 18-19 years, P. H. Pearson.

Red-winged Parrot, *Aprosmictus erythropterus*.

B. 6918, male, died 1/10/1926, after 33 years in captivity, W. Baker.

Crimson Rosella, *Platycercus elegans*.

B. 9116, male, died June, 1892; lived 8 years in captivity,
M. Bradley.

Port Lincoln Parrot, *Barnardius zonarius*.

B. 4226, male, died 1922, aged 38 years, M. Johns.

B. 18433, female, died 8/6/1936, aged 18 years, W. Steward.

Scarlet-chested Parrot, *Neophema splendida*.

B. 19636, male, died in captivity 16/5/1938, aged 4 years,
S. Harvey.

H. T. CONDON.
