

## News and Views.

### *Rare Birds and Sight Records.*

Elsewhere in this issue is a short note from Mr. Allen Ey, of Redbank, Millicent, who has established the presence of the Olive Whistler (*Pachycephala olivacea*) in his district in the south-east of this State. Mr. Ey first reported the species many months ago, and has now obtained a skin for the South Australian Museum. While the occurrence is unusual, it being a new record for the State, it is not surprising that this eastern species should occur in the south-east portion of South Australia. But

it is surprising that the birds have not been noticed before, especially as Mr. Ely says they are fairly numerous.

From time to time there are reports of long-lost Night Parrots, Ground Parrots, Orange-bellied Parrots or Pink Robins from various parts of South Australia. Now, although we know they are offered in all good faith, and the observers may be beyond reproach, such tempting records are worthless if unsubstantiated by a specimen. One feather would often suffice! Even the most ardent protectionist cannot argue against the taking of a specimen in such circumstances.

#### *Protection of Ducks in Victoria.*

According to a paragraph in the "Nature and Bush Notes" of the "Australasian," 30th December, 1939, regulations approved on 18th December, 1939, in Victoria, provide for the total protection of seven species of ducks. The season for Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) and Teal (*Querquedula* spp.) opens for a month on 1st March. The revised list is said to class the following species as fully protected, viz.: Blue-billed Duck (*Oxyura australis*), Blue-winged Shoveller (*Spatula rhynchotis*), Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*), Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*), Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*), Plumed Tree Duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*), and Whistling Tree Duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*). A notable absentee in the above list is the Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*), which occurs in Victoria.

While the new regulations are a move in the right direction, it is difficult to see how inexperienced shooters will be able to distinguish between the various species in poor light or on the wing. But it will probably reduce wanton shooting of species not desired for the table.

#### *Handbooks of Australian Birds.*

For the tyro, the "slightly-interested," and the non-collector, the observation and identification of birds in Australia is more than usually difficult because of the shortcomings of available "pocket" handbooks of Australian birds. No book yet produced has adequately figured every Australian species, showing field identification marks, wing and tail patterns in flight and in repose. References in published works to colours of bill, feet or eyes with notes on variation due to age, sex or other causes are also conspicuous by their absence.

An example of the kind of pictures required accompany Serventy's "Field Identification of Waders" ("Emu," vol. 38, plate

26). Such illustrations should preferably not be in colour, and most probably would be unsuitable if photographs; they should be clear, semi-diagrammatic drawings in line or half-tone. The book should also avoid the platitudes and generalisations of other works, while containing exact information on distribution, habits and nestings of each species. It is the aim of the South Australian Ornithological Association to produce something on these lines for South Australia under the auspices of the British Science Guild (S.A. Branch) as one of the handbooks of the Fauna and Flora of this State. Those on the Working Committee comprise Messrs. H. T. Condon, H. Jarman, C. Rix and S. Terrill, with Prof. J. B. Cleland, Messrs. Condon, McGillp and Parsons as an Editorial Committee. Work is in hand up to the end of the Tubinares. Ideas, notes or suggestions are welcomed from country members.

#### *The Colours of the Eyes of Birds.*

No one will deny that the most neglected and least-known aspect of bird morphology is that of the colourations of the iris of most species. It is a common sight in Museums to find mounted birds with "standard" coloured eyes, giving a most unreal appearance. While it is admitted that there is little information available in published works, it is nevertheless felt that glaring errors could often be avoided by consulting an ornithologist, under whose guidance correctly coloured "blanks" could be prepared.

There are many interesting problems connected with the changes in the eyes of birds from age or other cause, and it behoves all observers and collectors to record at every opportunity any information on the subject. Other details which should also be noted at the time are the date, age and sex, if known, also locality, together with any unusual circumstances. Species about which more data is required are Magpies (*Gymnorhina* spp.), Currawongs (*Strepera* spp.), certain members of the Parrot Tribe, Thornbills (*Acanthiza* spp.), and many others.

Mr. Boehm's article on page 73 of this issue recalls the fact that it is the convention nowadays to regard all southern forms of *Corvus* as the Raven (*Corvus coronoides*), but it is felt that the characters separating the Raven from the Crow (*C. cecillae*) are not very sound (the Crow has *white* down feathers, whereas the Raven has *grey* in the adult). There have also been several recent records of the Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*), an inland species, (also with white down in the adult) north of Adelaide and in the lower Murray mallee near Murray Bridge in the breeding season, where ordinarily one would expect the "Raven."

Early collectors rarely troubled to record the colours of the eyes of birds, and many otherwise perfect skins are much reduced in value because of this fact.

#### *Eggs of Cloncurry Parrot.*

In September, 1939, a pair of Cloncurry Parrots (*Barnardius macgillivrayi*) in the aviaries of Dr. A. H. Lendon, North Adelaide, produced three eggs, two being infertile, and one (broken and not saved) was fertile. They are appreciably smaller than eggs of the Mallee Ringneck (*B. barnardi*), Port Lincoln Parrot (*B. zonarius*) and Twenty-Eight Parrot (*B. semi-torquatus*), and are now in the S.A. Museum collection. The surface is smooth, dull white, and measurements are as follows: (1) 1.1 x .83 inches (egg slightly larger one end); (2) 1.05 x .85 inches (approximately equal both ends); (3) 1.1 x .9 inches (fertile, broken and not saved). The first egg was laid on 24th September, the other two following on alternate days.

As far as is known, the eggs of this species have never been previously described.

#### *Personal.*

Our best wishes go to our member, Captain D. W. Brummitt, who has been appointed regimental medical officer of the 2/10 A.I.F., which will soon leave for overseas service.

We also understand that Mr. Jack Hood, of Bool Lagoon, Naracoorte, has been called up and is attached to a Light Horse Regiment.

We regret to record the death of Mr. A. A. Simpson, of Burnside, who for many years supplied bird notes to the pages of the "S.A. Ornithologist."

Dr. D. L. Serventy, of the C.S. & I.R., Cronulla, New South Wales, passed through Adelaide on his way to Perth, W.A., early in December, 1939, and met several members. We look forward to meeting him again on his return in January or February, when it is understood he will have some interesting "movie films" and other items to bring before members.

Mr. J. Neil McGilp is representative for the S.A. Ornithological Association on the Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee recently appointed by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. Other members now on the Committee are: Mr. H. M. Hale (Director S.A. Museum), Prof. J. B. Cleland (National Parks), Prof. J. G. Wood (Professor of Botany, University), Col. D. Fulton, Messrs. H. Greaves (Botanic Gardens), J. H. Gosse (Flinders' Chase), E. H. Ising (Royal Society), R. R. Minchin (Adelaide Zoo),

G. J. Rodger (Forestry Dept.), A. H. Peters (Lands Dept.), A. J. Baker (Tourist Bureau), L. S. Smith (Secretary to the Hon. Minister for Agriculture), Dr. A. H. Lendon (Avicultural Society). Mr. F. W. Moorhouse (Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game) is Secretary.

Mr. G. M. Mathews, world-famous authority on Australian birds, is expected to arrive in Western Australia early in February on his way from England to Canberra to supervise the installation of his library and catalogues at the Commonwealth Library.

### *Recently Published.*

The attention of members is drawn to the following recent publications, which are of especial interest to South Australian ornithologists.

Serventy, D. L. "Emu," xxxix, p. 95, 6 figs.—"The White-breasted Petrel of South Australia." The outstanding feature of this account is that it proves that G. M. Mathews' recently-described *Puffinus leptorhynchus* from Western Australia is really a form of *Puffinus gavia*, and that it occurs often in considerable numbers in South Australia. A comprehensive bibliographical list is appended.

Whittell, Major H. M. "Emu," xxxix, p. 129.—"Recent Records of the Western Whipbird." As the presence of *Psophodes nigrogularis* has recently been established in two widely separated areas in South Australia, Major Whittell's records from Western Australia are especially interesting because, unlike our own representatives, the birds appear to be fairly numerous and even approachable. "When driving along a track in the sand-plain country frequented by this bird, one got up off the side of the track and flew in front of the car, at a height of about two feet from the ground, for a distance of about three chains, and then dived into the scrub. . . . I heard no call and Mr. Watts has never heard any call other than a 'chitter-chitter' like that of a Southern Scrub-Wren when disturbed at its nest."

"S.A. Naturalist," vol. 20, No. 1, p. 13.—Under the heading "The Native Pheasant" is given a short account of some references to the Mallee Fowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) and its mound by the Misses Rosamond and Florence Hill contained in their book "What We Saw in Australia" (1875). A most remarkable statement refers to the mound as being made of "dead leaves and sand, with four tunnel-entrances"! Of recent years there have been several rather unorthodox views expressed on

the nesting habits of the Mallee Fowl, but surely this "caps the lot"! It is suggested that the tunnels may be those of Wombats, as on one occasion (November, 1939) the writer met with such a case near Salt Creek, Coorong, S.A. The Mallee Fowl's mound had been in use in 1938, and since then an amiable Wombat had built his home beneath it, much to the discomfort of the birds, who had apparently deserted their incubatorium.

"S.A. Naturalist," vol. 20, No. 1, p. 1, 3 figs.—"The Quaint Musk Duck," by H. T. Condon. A photograph by the author of the head of a male showing the large pendant wattle characteristic of the species is included as a cover picture.

Condon, H. T. Trans. Royal Society of S. Aust., vol. 49, part 2, p. 311, 22nd December, 1939.—"The Cranial Osteology of Certain Tubinares." This paper is concerned with the identification and variation of the skulls of the larger Petrels and Albatrosses occurring in S.A. waters. A key and figures of each species are given to assist in identification.

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Would all contributors of bird notes or articles please forward same in a form *ready for the printer*, i.e., legibly written in ink, or typed for preference, on one side of the paper only. Contributions for the April issue should reach the Hon. Editors by the end of March.