

DWARFISM IN THE AUSTRALIAN RAVEN (*Corvus coronoides*).

By E. F. Boehm, Sutherlands, S.A., 11/10/40.

In 1912, Mathews (4) selected a small example of the Australian Raven from Perth, W.A., as the type of a new subspecies, which he named *Corvus coronoides perplexus*, and which, he supposed, differed from the typical form "in its much smaller size." Meinertzhagen (5) and Hartert (3) did not recognise this subspecies as valid, declaring that it does not, on the average, measure less than *C. coronoides coronoides*. Campbell (2) states that "the Raven has its small individuals, if not subspecies, as has the Crow. The birds of Rockbank and Laverton, V., on the dry basaltic plains to the west of Melbourne, are small in bill and wing, and such have been noted in other States."

In the northern part of the Murray Flats, S.A., between Eudunda and Morgan, I have seen many dwarf Ravens among birds of normal size, and I am satisfied that these small examples do not represent a distinct subspecies. Details of skins from Sutherlands, S.A., measured, according to methods described by Baldwin, Oberholser, and Worley (1), are given below. For the benefit of anyone not acquainted with these methods, it may be stated here that the dimensions of the culmen, tarsus, and hackles were taken with a pair of dividers, and the dimension of the wing is that of the chord of the closed wing, with the primaries not straightened or flattened.

Skin No. 163. Immature female. Iris medium brown. Pharynx pallid pink. Culmen from base, 46 mm.; height at base, 20 mm. Wing, 300 mm. Hackles, 28 mm. Tarsus, 53 mm. This specimen could be mistaken for *C. bennetti* (Little Crow) when only the dimensions are considered, but it has the plumage of a Raven in the immature adult phase, and is undoubtedly a stunted example of *C. coronoides*.

A true family group is represented by the four following skins: No. 184. Mature male. Iris white, with inner ring pale blue. Pharynx black. Culmen from base, 53 mm.; height at base, 23 mm. Wing, 353 mm.

Hackles, 38 mm. Tarsus, 65 mm. No. 185. Mature female. Iris white, with inner ring pale blue. Pharynx black. Culmen from base, 47 mm.; height at base, 20 mm. Wing, 322 mm. Hackles, 31 mm. Tarsus, 59 mm. No. 172. Juvenile. Iris dark brown. Pharynx pink. Culmen from base, 51 mm.; height at base, 19 mm. Wing, 296 mm. Tarsus, 62 mm. No. 173. Juvenile. Iris dark brown. Pharynx pink. Culmen from base, 50 mm.; height at base, 19 mm. Wing, 296 mm. Tarsus, 62 mm. Details of two normal mature females, for comparison with No. 185, are as follows: No. 153. Culmen from base, 50 mm.; height at base, 22 mm. Wing, 332 mm. Hackles, 36 mm. Tarsus, 56 mm. No. 180. Culmen from base, 52 mm.; height at base, 23 mm. Wing, 326 mm. Hackles, 35 mm. Tarsus, 62 mm.

Female No. 185 is much smaller than normal local birds of the same sex, but she was mated to a male which is larger than the average in the locality. The progeny of these birds are typical juveniles, and are comparable with the available descriptions of Mathews' type of *Corvus marianae halmaturinus*, from Kangaroo Island, S.A., which is a synonym of *C. coronoides*.

It is interesting to note that the details of ten Western Australian Ravens, tabulated by Meinertzhagen (Ref. 5, p. 120), show a considerable range in dimensions, although it must be remembered that age, sex, and the condition of the plumage may be expressed by these differences.

Dwarf individuals of the Raven could easily be confused in the field with the Little Crow by anyone not well acquainted with the latter species. It may be added that juvenile Ravens have a different call from the older birds, which increases the difficulties of the novice, but, in any case, one feels inclined to doubt some of the most southern sight records of the Little Crow.

References to Literature:

- (1) Baldwin, S. Prentiss: Oberholser, Harry.

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- C.; and Worley, Leonard G. "Measurements of Birds," 1931.
- (2) Campbell, A. G. "Emu," 29: p. 107; 1929.
 - (3) Hartert, Dr. Ernst. "Novitates Zoologicae," vol. 35: p. 53; 1929.
 - (4) Mathews, Gregory M. Ibid. 18: p. 442; 1912.
 - (5) Meinertzhagen, Colonel R. Ibid. 33: p. 87; 1926.