

## REVIEWS—

Races, Colonisation and Migration in the Silvereye. (By Allen Keast—*Gould League Notes* (N.S.W.), May, 1958.)

Here is an outline of the results of Dr. Keast's investigation of the silvereye which he commenced several years ago. It will be remembered that amateur ornithologists from many parts of Australia co-operated with the Author by sending him fresh specimens of silvereyes taken at different seasons. This most desirable procedure was an essential part of the systematic studies, one outcome of which was the recognition of the "Western Silvereye" as a race or subspecies of the eastern species (*lateralis*). In the 1926 R.A.O.U. Checklist these two are treated as distinct species. In 1955, following Stresemann's discovery, the name of the Western Silvereye was altered from *Zosterops australasiae* to *Z. gouldi* by the Checklist Committee. The western race resembles certain forms in eastern Australia by having a yellowish throat and under tail coverts, but is distinguished from all other silvereyes in this continent by the olive green upper parts (head, mantle, back, rump). In all other forms the mantle is dark grey.

Dr. Keast supplies a distribution map of Australia in which the range of the subspecies *halmaturina* ("grey-backed silvereye" of the Checklist until combined with *lateralis* in 1947) is given as from Eyre Peninsula eastwards to northern Victoria and the interior of New South Wales. In this variable race the throat has a "wash" of greenish yellow, the vent is same color, and flanks lack the brown coloration of Tasmanian and southern Victorian birds (race *tasmanica*). The coastal subspecies which extends from

eastern Victoria northwards to about Rockhampton is grey-mantled like *tasmanica* and *halmaturina*, but has a yellow throat and lacks the brown on the flanks.

Dr. Keast has rescued three other forms besides *halmaturina* from the "synonymy" of *lateralis* in the Checklist; all are from Queensland. The first is *tephropleura*, which has a brilliant yellow throat patch and, like *gouldi* of the south-west, yellow under tail coverts; it is longer-billed than mainland birds, and occurs on the Capricorn Group, near Rockhampton. The race *ramsayi*, named from a specimen from Palm Island, north of Townsville (wrongly shown as "Torres Strait" in the Checklist), occurs in coastal regions of northern Queensland. On Cape York there is another subspecies, *vegeta*, which, like *ramsayi*, has a similar color pattern to *tephropleura*. Both differ from the last-named in the presence of a more prominent circle of white feathers around the eye. The distribution map, already referred to, shows that in the greater part of the interior of Australia silvereyes are absent. Of course, another species, the Yellow Silvereye (*Z. lutea*) occurs in the coastal fringe of the tropical north.

Study of geographical variation has enabled Keast to recognise a previously unsuspected northward, autumn migration of Tasmanian birds to Victoria and New South Wales. These birds (*tasmanica*) do not pair as a rule with resident birds in New South Wales (*lateralis*) but return south to breed. It is thought that many of the silvereyes which breed near Melbourne are of the "brown-sided Tasmanian race". Beginners should be reminded that, though the brownish flanks are prominent, examples of this race need to be examined in the hand before they can

be identified with certainty. Dr. Keast has established that it was birds of this stock which, becoming caught in a high wind, eventually reached New Zealand, 1,200 miles from Australia; this occurred during the middle of the last century. The birds extended their range still further to Norfolk Island in the year 1904, "presumably . . . a flock being caught up in a wind and swept out to sea."

The spread of silvereyes in some parts of the range, e.g. Murrumbidgee area of New South Wales, has been aided by agriculture. Also, it is the young birds which colonise new areas and drier country, after exploratory travels in autumn and winter. Viability of seeds is unaffected by digestion in the silver-eye, which spreads the introduced plants on which it has learned to feed, such as the ink-berry and nightshade (*Solanum opacum*). Some very charming photographs, taken by himself, are supplied by Dr. Keast, who, in this brief summary of his discoveries and researches, has shown the silvereye is not only an admirable subject for study, but also a species from which many facts of general biological interest and importance may be learned. We look forward to a much more detailed account of the silvereye by Dr. Keast at a later date.—H. T. Condon.

-----  
 "I name this parrot . . ." (By Arthur A. Prestwich, 61 Chase Road, Oakwood, London, N.14.)

This small book of 86 pages is devoted to an account of persons whose names have been squeezed, bent or distorted to fit the international code of rules which governs the introduction of scientific names—in this case the scientific names of members of the family Psittacidae or Parrots.

The book provides "light reading" for those whose special interests are aviculture and ornithology, and for the curious and inquisitive it will answer such questions as "Who was *van Musschenbrook*?" and "Which *MacGillivray* did North have in mind when he named the Cloncurry Parrot?" By treating only the "present accepted" scientific names (authority(?) Peters, 1937), the Author has omitted many times their number of synonyms and subspecies nomina inquirendae.

Mr. Prestwich in his Preface alludes to the fact that some taxonomists decried the use of personal names which are irrelevant. Of

course, there are many generic names derived from modern patronymics which also offend on other grounds, such as lack of euphony or hybrid derivation.

The short biographies seem to be uniformly good and fairly reliable (judging by examples with which the present writer is familiar). They have been compiled from many sources, such as obituary notices; readers may consider that some of the "lives" have been rather overdone. A few minor slips have also crept in, but this should not be taken as criticism of the Author, who has not always been in a position to judge. The work as a whole bears the stamp of painstaking and careful preparation.

The appeal of the book may have been widened if something of the rules and methods of employing personal names as scientific designations had been given. For instance, it could have been pointed out (mainly for the benefit of editors of bird journals) that specific and subspecific names derived from names of persons are now *always* written with a small initial letter. Also, there are special rules for the introduction of genera to denote dedication, different endings being added to modern patronymics according to whether they are terminated by a consonant or vowels. Specific names which are dedications to persons are formed in the genitive by adding to the complete name an 'i' if the person is a man or 'ae' if the person is a woman, e.g. *Platycercus zonarius whitei* (after S. A. White) and *Geopsittacus occidentalis whiteae* (after Mrs. S. A. White).

The use of personal names in the vernacular has almost completely disappeared in Australian ornithological circles, and the continued employment nowadays by aviculturists of such names as Banks, Bauer, Brown and Pennant must be condemned.—H. T. Condon.