

Renaming Australian Birds.

To the Editors, "The S.A. Ornithologist",
Sirs,

The Hon. Secretary of the S.A. Ornithological Association was good enough to hand to Capt. S. A. White a copy of my address on Nomenclature, apparently for "review" in this journal. (See *ante* p. 232).

A review is a summary of what an article, book, etc., contains. There is a difference between a review and a critique, and Capt. White has criticised my address somewhat biassedly, therefore please permit me a brief rejoinder.

In the first place, I absolutely refrain from personal matters, therefore I pass over Capt. White's reference to the writer's "very conservative views", and the beginning of his critique, and near the end of it, his reference apparently to a connection of his—"a great field ornithologist", whom Gould was supposed to have treated shabbily.

1. Capt. White declares that nomenclature is a science, thus staking his opinion against standard dictionaries. "Chambers's Encyclopaedia", for instance, furnishes a complete list of 39 concrete and abstract sciences, but does *not* include nomenclature.

2. The Army, Navy, and Civil Service promotions have nothing to do with ornithology. No, but they have to nomenclature, by analogy, *i.e.*, by the selection of the most fit person (not necessarily prior or senior), or name, in the case of nomenclature.

3. Capt. White contends that Gould was a strict priorist—a helpful statement in favour of, and not against, using his nomenclature which was up to date, and a good starting point for some Australian names—those that are ornithologically correct.

4. "No progressive ornithologist works on Gould now—his work is obsolete", says the Captain. Hear what Professor Macgillivray states:—"Mr. Gould has produced a series of magnificent works, without rival in the Cabinets of Science.

In taking a review of Mr. Gould's labours we cannot fail to be impressed with the benefits conferred by them on Ornithological Science."

5. I do admit in my book, "Nests and Eggs", that Gould's classification is somewhat obsolete—a statement strictly accurate. Capt. White confuses systematic classification with nomenclature. The first is science, the other not.

6. As to the question "Who made the rules?" of Zoological Nomenclature, Capt. White would be "much surprised" if any Australian were deemed worthy to sit on the National Committee—a severe reflection on the biological professors of our respective universities. The committee is composed of zoologists in general, and not ornithologists in particular.

7. If *The Emu* were "to popularize the study of native birds", at the expense of scientific matter, that would be one side. Capt. White wobbles here. If he reads my address again (I seriously recommend him to do so), he will see I said "one of the two principal planks of our Union is to popularize, etc." (Page 4).

8. Capt. White endeavours to make capital, out of what *The Auk* and *The Ibis* have stated concerning the R.A.O.U. Official "Check List of the Birds of Australia." These learned journals forgot, surely, that it was an Australian list they were judging and not one solely for *savants* of the old world. Moreover, they showed careless criticism when they referred to "lack of" or "that no synonymy" was given. The "Check List" contains references which lead up to all the literature available, besides what is perhaps more practical, a reference is furnished of a life-coloured plate for almost every species named.

9. Capt. White states that "The International Committee of Zoological Nomenclature is steadily confirming and rejecting names." How does he know that, if he does not possess a copy of the rules, or follows them without question? He refers to two conferences—1892 and 1901. These were held respectively at Moscow and Berlin, two cities which have eternally disgraced science. Fortunately Australia was not represented at either.

10. And, in conclusion. All ornithologists in South Australia are not of Capt. White's opinion, as the following extract of a letter received by me shows:—"It was with much

pleasure that I received a copy of your address on 'Renaming Australian Birds'. I quite think, with you, that Mr. So-and-So is pushing the priority rule to an extent that is causing confusion in the nomenclature of our birds, and I imagine that the makers of the rule never contemplated that it would be pushed to such extremes." That, sirs, is the sum and substance of the whole matter. "*The makers of the rule (The Law of Priority), never contemplated that it would be pushed to such extremes.*" Therefore, before our next "Check List" is completed let us seek an amelioration of that overbearing and mischievous rule.