

XV.

TOM CARTER, Esq., R.A.O.U.—Extracts from Articles on
"The Educative Value of Collections."

Having read in the last issue of "The Emu" (January, 1923) of the adoption by the R.A.O.U. of the seven clauses in regard to permits and private collections of the skins and eggs of Australian birds, I, as an old collector and field naturalist, beg to make a few remarks.

I beg to offer to Mr. Edwin Ashby my best thanks for the firm stand that he took on the question, seconded by Mr. A. J. Campbell, and I hope that these gentlemen will also receive the thanks of all field-workers.

I am strongly in favour of *real* student collecting being encouraged, as each such collector will, in great measure, also become a *protector*, and will note any breaches of existing laws, and also the increase or decrease of any birds in his district, and the cause of the same.

The setting apart of Government reserves for bird life, etc., near all new townships is an excellent plan, really forming National Parks, and rough broken land, unsuitable for agriculture or building, would answer the purpose quite well without the financial loss of alienating *good* country for reserves. . . .

Domestic cats in a wild state are now exceedingly numerous in many parts of Western Australia, and are, I believe, protected, because they are supposed to kill rabbits, but my own opinion is that they kill far more birds than rabbits. On my late station at Broome Hill, I *know* they killed some of my young lambs, and on one occasion I found a very large one in the act of eating the lips of an unfortunate ewe that had "got down" when lambing, and it had also eaten off the ewe's ears. The ewe was still alive, and I took it home for treatment. . . .

The "bag" of a collector of birds' skins is hardly appreciable, in comparison with the immense mortality amongst birds during the heat-waves that occur periodically in the dry northern areas, where I have personally seen White Cockatoos and Crows fall dead from the trees, and at sundown I have seen the native women sally out to the river-beds (which were usually dry, except for occasional pools) and in a very short space of time return with their capacious "yandees," or wooden scoops, heaped full with hundreds of birds, mostly small ones, that had been killed by the heat, yet in spite of these immense losses over large areas of country, birds have *not* decreased in these *pastoral* districts, according to my long experience there. Some have

very much increased, as have the White Cockatoos in recent years. . . . Bush fires, often wantonly started, as well as the "burning-off" that is necessary in the clearing of land for agriculture and other purposes, undoubtedly destroy great numbers of birds. . . . The closely-settled *agricultural* districts are where the bulk of birds are either being destroyed by fires, or driven away through lack of scrub, and the food derived from it in the shape of attendant insect life, etc., and that is where protection is most needed, to get as many "Bird Reserves" proclaimed as soon as possible, and do not restrict the genuine student collector too much, as he is almost invariably a bird-lover, and if you do away with him, there are very few others of the general public who take an interest in bird-life.
