

THE
South Australian Ornithologist.

VOL. VI

1st JANUARY, 1921.

PART I.

**The South Australian Ornithological
Association.**

MONTHLY PROCEEDINGS.

October 1st. Mr. F. M. Angel in the chair.

The alleged fruit-eating habit of the goldfinch was discussed. The members considered that this bird is harmful to the smaller fruits, such as cherries, strawberries and paper shell almonds, but have no evidence of its being destructive to the larger fruits.

Captain White called attention to the fact that the roosting of the landrails in trees was reported by Mr. A. Crompton at a meeting held on the 31st August, 1918, so that a record had already been made of this unusual habit.

Captain White reported that Mr. H. L. White, of Belltrees, New South Wales, had very generously given some sets of eggs and promised to send on many more towards an egg collection for this Association. A resolution was passed heartily thanking Mr. White for his valuable gift, and suggested that with his permission the gift be called the "H. L. White Collection."

By request of the Association, Captain White consented to act as curator of the collection for the time being.

The question of securing a suitable cabinet for the collection was discussed, and it was decided to invite subscriptions from the members towards this fund.

Mr. R. Beck reported having seen a crow at Seaton flying very high and going towards the North, chased by magpies. This bird is becoming very scarce near the city.

Mr. A. Crompton heard a Pallid Cuckoo calling, on the 29th of August, and Captain White remarked that this Cuckoo

is very scarce for this time of the year, when usually it is very plentiful.

Captain White stated that Screech Owls were nesting at the Reedbeds and that the Blue Wrens had already brought out a brood. He also tabled a fine specimen of *Coracina robusta mentalis*, taken at the Reedbeds.

Although South Australia was quoted by Mathews as the type locality very few South Australian specimens were in collections, and this skin was secured for that purpose.

Birds for discussion for the evening were Bristle Birds, specimens of which were tabled from the collections of the S. A. Museum, Captain White and Mr. J. W. Mellor. Upon comparison of the skins of *Sphenura broadbenti* it was noted that the Coorong bird was lighter in colouration than that from Robe, 'which in turn was slightly lighter than the Victorian form.

Dr. Morgan said the species was plentiful on the sand dunes near the coastline from the Murray mouth to Geelong, Victoria, and can often be heard from the hotel at Beachport.

Captain White had seen , one of these birds enter a bush, but was, unable to locate it until he noticed its tracks leading into a rabbit warren under the bush. He closed the mouth of the hole for the night, but the bird was still alive in the morning, having made no attempt to scratch its way out.

Specimens of *Sphenura brachyptera* were also examined, and it was pointed out that this species had only two bristles on each side of the bill, whereas *Sphenura broadbenti* had four or more.

Captain White considered that the bristles were used by the bird to guide insects into its mouth.

October 29th. Mr. F. M. Angel in the chair.

A letter was received from the Secretary to the Minister of Industry expressing the Minister's appreciation of the valuable report furnished by the Association in reference to the fruit-eating habits of the Goldfinch,

Dr. William Ray, of Angas Street, was nominated for membership.

Dr. Morgan exhibited a photograph of a Coot nesting at the Botanic Gardens, and two photos of the nests of the White-headed Stilt taken on the Adelaide Plains.

Mr. Parsons showed a photograph of a cluster of forty-two nests of the Fairy Martin, built on the trunk of a gum tree, South Queensland.

He also reported having seen *Hylacola cauta* near Mount Lofty. This bird was reported some years ago by Mr. F. R. Zietz from Black Hill at the entrance of the Fifth Creek Gully.

Professor J. B. Cleland commented on the increase of Willie Wagtails (*Leucocirca tricolor*) in Adelaide and suburbs of late years. In the nineties, these birds were uncommon in the suburbs. Now many gardens have a pair, and the birds may frequently be heard singing at night.

At about 10 p.m. on September 15th last, a clear starlight night with no moon, no less than three were heard in the distance of about two and a half miles, between Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide (where the first was heard), and Fullarton.

Do both sexes sing at night? Is night singing only associated with the nesting season? Do the birds rival each other as roosters do?

He also exhibited a nest of *Morganornis superciliosus*, found at Clarendon on October 13. The interior, as well as the entrance, had been lined with grass, and interwoven in the entrance were three Spider Orchids (*Caladenia dilatata*), a number of white Everlastings (*Helichryssum Baxteri*), and two flower heads of a brownish rush-like plant (*Luzula campestris*). Marks of the bird's bill were recognisable on the stems where these had been bruised in picking off the flowers. There seems to be no doubt that the flowers were used for decorative purposes. Moreover, the bird, had exhibited undoubted predilection for certain flowers; the white Everlastings were numerous, but the Spider Orchids (yellow to brownish with a purple patch on the labellum) were relatively few and scattered, and much less numerous than a striking blue orchid which had not been gathered. The rush also, was inconspicuous and not very abundant. The birds seem to prefer yellowish brown and white. The nest was untenanted, but the flowers were fresh, having been probably gathered that morning or perhaps the evening before. Professor Cleland acknowledged his indebtedness to Mr. J. M. Black and Dr. Rogers, for identification of plants.

Dr. Morgan suggested that an old Babbler's nest had been taken possession of by Spotted-sided Finches.

Mr. F. R. Zietz exhibited a number of bird skins from the S.A. Museum collection, comprising Birds of Paradise and

The South Australian Ornithological Association.

other bright plumaged birds from New Guinea, a series of 'Sun Birds, including the only Australian species., and the skin of an adult male of the Sonnerat's Jungle Fowl from Ceylon, which is believed to be one of the ancestors of the Domestic Fowl.

November 29th. Mr. Edwin Ashby presided.

Dr. William Ray, of Angas Street, was duly elected a member, and Dr. Hubert Jay, of Kensington Park, was nominated for membership.

Dr. Morgan exhibited a photograph of a nest of the Black Throated Grebe, taken at Morphettville, on a small overflow of the Sturt. The nest contained the second brood for this season. The Doctor related an amusing incident in connection with a previous attempt to photograph the same nest. When focussing, with his head under the hood, a quantity of half digested fish and other food landed on his neck, and on looking about to ascertain the cause discovered a nest with three young herons immediately overhead. The food had been vomited by these birds.

In the same tree a nest of the Murray Magpie was noted.

Dr. Morgan also stated that, Moorhens (*Gallinula tenabrosa*) were about in the same locality, and although no nests were seen he felt sure that these birds were nesting there.

Mr. K. Ashby reported a nest of the Mistletoe Bird in an apple tree at Blackwood, in the same spot as last year.

The nest was composed very largely of the sawdust-like material cast out by borers in the wattle trees. This same habit had been previously noted by Mr. Ashby.

Mr. Zietz stated that he had been informed that a pair of Galahs had been observed at Mylor during the last week in October.

The main business of the evening was an account by Mr. F. E. Parsons of a trip by motor car from Hergott through to Queensland. The birds met with were described, and a fine collection of skins was exhibited. A full report of the trip is published in this number.

Mr. Parsons was congratulated upon his extremely valuable records and a hearty vote of thanks was accorded for the very interesting evening.

In view of the Christmas holidays, it was decided to hold the next meeting at the residence of the President, "Wittunga" Blackwood, on December 18th.