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For some time past much has been written for and against the collector. In writing the word "collector" I refer to the person who takes specimens to make use of them, either as a means of identification or for a search after knowledge of a subject. The tirade of abuse has been against the bird-and-egg collector, and it has been said that there is no need to take specimens when there is already plenty of material in our museums, which material is available for students in ornithology or oology. If this claim were correct there would be little need of a student residing within reach of such institutions gathering more material. I regret to say, however, that the material in our own Museum, or in those that I have had the pleasure of entering, is far from satisfactory to the careful student. Much of this material is not authentic, has little data of value, and, moreover, is not available to the student when he has the leisure to study it, usually after nightfall. While on the matter of museums I would like to say that most of the authentic, well-dated material cased in our museums has been given by collectors from time to time. First I would like to ask what crime the collector is guilty of? Is it that he has decimated the numbers of our birds? In reply to this I would like to take you to a portion of little-known Central Australia, where collectors there are not. Have the birds in this virgin country, untouched by hand of man, multiplied? I say no. Old colonists will tell you that they have decreased. Again, take our common birds,

on a conservative estimate quite 100 birds or eggs of the common birds are taken to one bird or egg of the rarer kinds. Have the latter increased or have the former decreased? The Wagtail, for instance. Has a boy been known to go through his youth without taking the eggs of the Wagtail? Few, I think. Yet to-day the Wagtail is so numerous in Australia that the R.A.O.U. Council, in its wisdom, agrees to export some of these to a neighbouring island. Another friend, the Magpie. Who has not taken the beautifully-marked eggs of this bird? Yet is it any scarcer to-day? I refer purposely to these two birds, as they, with other of our feathered friends, have adapted themselves to circumstances. They have met the altered condition of ploughed fields, burnt patches, etc. But others of our birds have been driven out, for they could not accustom themselves to their environments, so were driven out into unfriendly quarters, where food and climate conditions did not suit them any better than what they had left; here they met with periodical droughts which so decimated them that to-day they are often classed as extinct. I claim that the plough, the clearing of scrub by fire, and the stocking of land has been adverse to the balance of nature so far as some of our birds are concerned. You cannot blame the collector. Take, again, the little Sericornes, the Amytornes, and such-like birds. By virtue of their habitat and habits these birds are seldom observed except by those interested in the study of birds, yet who can claim that they are to-day more numerous than fifty years ago? Who can claim that they have decreased in their true untouched habitat? The careful collector who studies birds knows that a given area of suitable country can only support a certain number of birds. We know, for instance, that the Hawk family always hunt their young away to seek quarters of their own. We know also that a pair of Blue Wrens in a private garden of small dimensions will always hunt their offspring out and prevent the intrusion of other birds if possible. We all should know that even by protection in its fullest meaning, we are only able to fill up the suitable localities with birds suitable to those spots. We have cleared up thousands of square miles of country by plough, fire, and domestic stock, upon which certain birds cannot live. Yet because those birds are not with us to-day some people howl at the collector for clearing out such-and-such a bird. Blame the collector for what he does do, not for what he does not do. It is a well-known fact, in South Australia particularly so, that the men who started the cry for the protection of our useful birds were all collectors. They foresaw the need of preserving virgin localities for our birds, and worked then, and now work, to have

more acreage set apart for the birds. It is the collector who endeavours by lecture to teach the public how necessary it is to protect our birds. He speaks from personal experience of the birds. The anti-collector raises his voice in favour of birds to-day, but to-morrow he is missing. It is the collector, interested in his study, that keeps on hammering away till he gets something of advantage to his friends the birds. Is there need for collectors? In recent years several new birds have been found in Australia. Who found them? Collectors! Do we know the life history of even our common birds? If you pick up, say, Mathews's "Birds of Australia," costing considerably over £100, you will realize there is much missing. Who is to supply the information? Collectors! How many of us know why the Yellow-tailed Tit builds a two-storied nest? why the White-shafted Fantail builds a tail to its beautiful nest? whether the Australian Cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of the foster parents or do they place them there? Where does the Banded Stilt breed? It is unknown outside Australia and New Zealand, and yet authentic eggs have not been recorded and this bird may often be seen in thousands. In fact, how few of us know much about our birds. The history of European birds does not deserve the word "finis." Does the history (!!) of Australian birds deserve the phrase "That's good enough"? Many people advocate the camera and the field-glass in the study of birds, and refuse to sanction a permit to collectors who take material to study. The camera, in my opinion, accounts for the death of more birds than the collector. I have personally seen a photographer keep parents away from "just-hatched" young for four hours; result, the next day there were four dead young in the nest. On another occasion a bird photographer, refusing advice, interfered with certain nests, both with three young; result, the parent birds deserted and the young died. It is a well-known fact that many of our birds will desert their nests or young if they are interfered with. There are others that you can take liberties with without the danger of birds deserting. A careful camera man is all right, but some go to extremes to get a good snap. The same applies equally to the collector. The field-glass is very useful indeed, but how often has the observer with glasses been proven astray by the actual production of the bird itself. The field-glass focused upon a small bird, like a Pardalote, at say 100 feet up in a tree is far from reliable, yet such observations are often recorded and claimed as authentic. Observation by note and call, moreover, is just as unreliable. The writer had this occur in Tasmania when from the note he listed a certain bird, only to be proved unreliable by a resident in the district. Bird notes

and calls vary in different localities. If we are to carefully study our birds we must allow interested students a permit to collect skins and eggs. One often hears that "So-and-so" has a collection worth thousands of pounds! From personal experience I state that a collector would not get 20 per cent. of the money he has spent on securing his material. I'll undertake to hand my collection over to any person or institution that will give me one-fifth of what I have actually spent in hard cash in my endeavour to get the material. This I am confident is the position with all collectors. I do not regret the expenditure, for it has been a pleasure to get out amongst the birds and study them and collect material which, as with all other collectors, I make available to any students who care to work upon it. Before I took up collecting I did not trouble much about the protection of birds. I shot more useful birds then in twelve-months than I do now that I collect, and to-day I claim there is no one more keen on the protection of our useful birds, and I know this is common with practically all collectors.
