

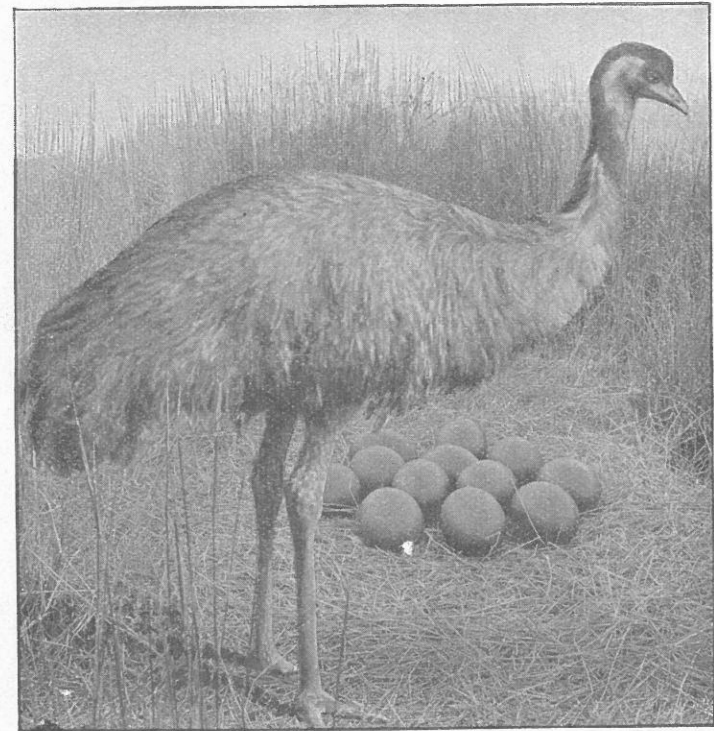


The Emu

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A Quarterly Magazine to popularise the Study and Protection of Native Birds.

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.



Hon. Editors { A. J. CAMPBELL, Col. Mem. B.O.U. (Acting)
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VOL. VII, 1907-8.

Melbourne:

WALKER, MAY & CO., PRINTERS, 25 MACKILLOP STREET.

LONDON AGENT:

R. H. PORTER, 7 PRINCES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE, W.

1908.

PLATE I.



(1.) Belt of Sheoaks (*Casuarina*). (2.) Clump of Box (*Eucalyptus*).

FROM PHOTOS BY A. J. CAMPBELL.



The Emu

Official Organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union.

"Birds of a feather."

VOL. VII.]

1ST JULY, 1907.

[PART I.

On Fifteen Thousand Acres: its Bird-Life Sixty Years Ago.

BY ISAAC BATEY, DROUIN, VICTORIA.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA.

THE area under consideration is situated some 20 miles north-west of Melbourne, and is part of that extensive rich pastoral country that attracted the first settlers in Victoria's early colonial history. Through it lay the main route to the central goldfields, that were discovered in 1851 and thronged with hundreds of thousands of fortune-seekers from all quarters of the globe. My early field observations extend back to 1846, when, as a young man on my father's station, I roamed the country far and wide. Most of the area is of basaltic origin, and the higher land to the rear marks the position whence, from great fissures and volcanic vents, the ancient lava poured out southward as far as Melbourne and Geelong. The subterranean hills of this ancient gold-bearing rock are shown in many places along the creek sides, where the water action has cut down through the superincumbent beds of lava, and exposed them to view. Timber was not plentiful on the basalt, though on the silurian ridges to the north, and thence inland, the forests of eucalypts were dense. My area and my list of birds have been influenced by this silurian country, for therefrom the lava fields received their first supply of vegetation and of bird life in past times, and from there in the present certain species of birds make annual or periodic incursions on to what is not essentially their true habitat.

Bounded on the east by Emu Creek, on the west by Mt. Alexander road, the 15,000 acres possess a fine watercourse, Jackson's Creek flowing east through the centre of the block. The course of this stream is nicely timbered with a variety of eucalypts, wattle, with other scrubs, fringing the banks of the stream. Belts of sheoaks (*Casuarina*) on the uplands above, extend along each side of the river, one a mile long, the other about 4 miles in length, in parts a mile wide, and forming a dense forest. This last forestry was on Glencoe station, taken up by

Messrs. Edward and John William Page in 1836. Besides sheoaks on Glencoe, there were clumps of white, yellow, and spotted box (*Eucalyptus*), and three or four small patches of mallee-like scrub. The course of Emu Creek was timbered like that of Jackson's Creek. The greater portion of the 15,000 acres was plain, with odd trees dotted around. Thus, all these things considered, the block was, in earlier times, a paradise for a variety of birds, many of which, owing to the destruction of trees, have now left the district. Some species have become extinct a long way outside of the territory selected for this paper.

BIRDS OF PREY.

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE (*Uroaëtus audax*).—This great bird was very numerous in 1846. Shot-guns could have reduced it in a very slight degree; good rifles would, but we did not use that kind of firearm those days. Though Eagles were ever so plentiful, my tally was only four. I do not suppose my late father accounted for more than six in his day. When strychnine was introduced, however, it rapidly balanced accounts with these destructive birds. During the lambing of 1850, on the Emu Creek, my father poisoned dead lambs, and by the time dropping was finished I had 14 of the great birds laid in a row. It was ascertained that an Eagle's method of killing a young lamb was to drive its powerful talons through the skull of the defenceless creature. The bird then stood on the victim, broke into the fore part, and, working to the rear, if undisturbed, stripped the flesh, leaving only skin and skeleton. My experience of Wedge-tails covers a lifetime, yet I never saw one attempt to fly off with a young lamb, though at that stage it is a light weight. Lambing takes place before Eagles begin nesting, consequently when a lamb was killed there was no necessity to carry it away. In later times it was discovered Eagles had nested in tall trees in gullies in Brodie's Forest.* Evidently these bulky structures last for a great number of years. In proof how destructive Eagles were, in 1850 I had charge of a strong mob containing lambs from three days to six weeks old. One morning, reaching my flock after sunrise, a brace of lambs lay dead, with the birds standing on them; several other Wedge-tails were on the scene. If they had been left to follow their inclinations the probabilities are that each bird would have slain a lamb.

SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaëtus leucogaster*).—It was during 1851 that one of these magnificent birds appeared on Jackson's Creek, where it remained a considerable time. It is the same bird we find in Riverina, where in the sixties one that had been shot was examined, after which another was seen seven miles south of Hay.

WHISTLING EAGLE (*Haliastur sphenurus*).—This large Hawk casually visited the locality in autumn or winter, and feasted on dead carcasses. It has a plaintive whistling voice. My father named it the "Thick-headed Hawk."

BLACK-CHEEKED FALCON (*Falco melanogenys*).—My opinion is that, for rapidity of flight, this bird cannot be excelled. I have noticed it taking exercise—headlong plunges downwards and then shooting up vertically. It was somewhat rare our way, and was supposed to nest in the Eagle Rocks, situated on our run. The cliff in question is the finest on Jackson's Creek. Magpies, though very courageous, feared this Falcon greatly, for, from observation, when other birds raised alarm cries on its approach, the Magpies consulted their own safety. Those years Musky Lorikeets, following up

* Situated to the south of Jackson's Creek.



Eagle Rocks.
(The crags in the upper part, where the Eagles nested, are basalt (lava) rock. As a deep flow this overlies Silurian gold-bearing sandstone, now exposed by the action of the creek.)

gum blossom, passed in droves. When pursued they endeavoured to escape by mounting aloft, but their enemy, shooting above them, darted downwards and pinned one with his strong talons. The poor thing screamed until the Falcon silenced it by a nip on the head with his sharp bill. Once after sundown a horde of Ravens was seen, perhaps a hundred yards in the air, when suddenly a Black-cheeked Falcon shot straight up and caught one, but, the prey being too heavy, the captor fell with it to the ground at an angle of 45 degrees. We ran over, and the Falcon took flight, but the victim was stone dead—killed, I think, with a hard squeeze across the back. It is upwards of 20 years since this grand Falcon was noted in the old locality; the last pair seen was at the Hanging Rock, where presumably they nested.

BLACK FALCON (*Falco niger*).—This Hawk seems to be widely distributed, because I have seen it on the Old Man Plain in Riverina, where on one occasion I saw it take a Quail that was flushed as I rode along. In this case the Falcon appeared to strike the quarry with his breastbone, stunning it, then, wheeling about, picked it up. The Black Falcon, unlike his grey brother, affects the plains, and if you are riding, walking, or driving stock, should a Quail rise, to your surprise a Falcon often comes from behind you like a flash. The Black Falcon was a rare bird of old in my part. Twenty years must have elapsed since one was noted; still I suppose it will be met with about Rockbank.

GOSHAWK (*Astur approximans*).—This handsome bird is still a frequent visitor, yet at no time was it plentiful. Apparently its favourite haunt is the course of a stream. Once it was observed on Jackson's Creek hunting rabbits under bushes. This Hawk is to be met with in this part of Gippsland (Drouin), but I do not recollect seeing it on the Murrumbidgee, where I was previously stationed.

SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter cirrhocephalus*).—Always a rare casual; the last one seen was near Woodend.

BROWN HAWK (*Hieracidea orientalis*).—Still a permanent on the old location; nests there yet; never saw it hunting. Long since, by the side of a nest, a dead snake was seen, hung on a branch. This harmless Hawk is ruthlessly shot by excursionists from Melbourne.

NANKEEN KESTREL (*Cerchneis cenchroides*).—This bird nested every year on our station; perhaps owing to introduced Sparrows and Starlings taking up the few hollow spouts, it does not breed there now. It still appears, and is found in the Drouin region. Once I saw it peep into a hole in a tree branch where a White-rumped Wood-Swallow had her nest in Riverina. The Kestrel evidently saw there was only one plan to secure the sitting bird, so, thrusting his long leg down the aperture, he pulled the poor thing out.

HARRIER (*Circus gouldi*).—Still an annual visitant, nesting in growing crops; and noted on the Murrumbidgee, where its nest was found in a swamp. This bird breeds at Drouin. Four young are evidently one brood.

LETTER-WINGED KITE (*Elanus scriptus*).—About 1888 I saw a bird of this species at Toolern (Melton Shire) and three near Mt. Macedon. One of the latter was shot, and its identity established. It would appear to be the rarest of the Hawk tribe in above region.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (*Elanus axillaris*).—One season in Newham Shire some of these Kites appeared, and their identity was proved. They and the previous species seemed to be out of bounds thereabouts.

WHITE GOSHAWK (*Astur nova-hollandia*).—Messrs. Notman, Mt. William, near Lancefield, grassed a White Goshawk, which I stuffed. My late father spoke of one obtained on the River Plenty, near Greensborough, during the forties.



NIGHT BIRDS.

LESSER MASKED OWL (*Strix delicatula*).—Probably it was in 1847, on a moonless night, my father, seeing a light-coloured bird close at hand, got the gun, while I attended him with the old-fashioned tin lantern. Finally he located the stranger on top of a post, and a shot was fired at it without killing it. Doubtless this was a Delicate Owl. Many years elapsed before another was seen; then one was taken, another found dead. Some drovers from Lachlan way, amongst other birds taken to sell down country, had a brace of these young Owls. In 1882 saw one near Lancefield.

BOOBOOK OWL (*Ninox boobook*).—Always a permanent, is still on the old place, and in 1905 a brood of young, recognised as such by their cries, was noted. Should say they were bred on Redstone Hill. This bird, on the Murrumbidgee, N.S.W., appeared to me to have a different call to those in Victoria. "Rolf Boldrewood" renders its cry "Hoo-hoo."

TAWNY FROGMOUTH (*Podargus strigoides*).—Always a rare bird in the locality, the timber being somewhat unsuitable; but it was afterwards found in Brodie's Forest. The country in Lancefield vicinity appears to be a favourite haunt.

WHITE-THROATED NIGHTJAR (*Eurostopus albigularis*).—On coming to Sunbury, in 1846, saw it frequently; after that year noticed it hunting at dusk. Between 1855 and '60 flushed one from the ground not far from our residence. Since then, though moving about much in and out, I have never met this bird.

OWLET NIGHTJAR (*Egotheles nova-hollandiae*).—It was well into the fifties when we had our first intimation of this bird by its peculiar whistling call. From then till now it appeared rare. Within the last three years one was frequently heard and seen.

PASSERINE BIRDS.

RAVEN (*Corone australis*).—One of my brothers maintained, long years ago, that we had both Crows and Ravens, but I could not distinguish them then. As far back as can be remembered Ravens feasted on the berries that grew on thorny boxthorn and briar bushes, which to a great extent have replaced wattles on the creeks. Both Crows and Ravens, I should say, are very useful birds in destroying insect life of all kinds, either in the matured or larva state, though they are also pests on fruit.

GREY CROW-SHRIKE (*Strepera cuneicaudata*).—Of old came down in force about autumn, remained through some winter months, after which it left, supposedly to breed in the forest country. For years it has been an uncommon bird. Saw nest at Newham. This bird has taken to fruit.

PIED CROW-SHRIKE (*Strepera graculina*).—For a year or two after our arrival, in 1846, this bird was an autumn or winter visitor. To the best of recollection it ceased visiting the locality prior to 1850. About 1877 observed a large flock of them near Kilmore; next saw one near Lancefield, in 1882 or thereabouts. This was the last seen. For two years as rabbit inspector constantly exploring Gisborne Shire, then for a few months Newham Shire, a few times in Lancefield region, away across Bolinda to Mickleham, and in all such travels failed to locate a Pied Crow-Shrike. Was at Avenel about 1876 for six weeks, during which time, though excursions were made, did not see one.

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH (*Corcorax melanorhamphus*).—Seen once or twice in Glencoe sheoaks. Still found at Gisborne, Newham, and adjacent timbered lands. Very tame in Riverina. The kitchen had two doors opposite each other; the cook out, one bird looked in, ran through, the others followed. Permanent formerly in Brodie's Forest.

ORIOLE (*Oriolus viridis*).—A rare visitor on ancient location, where it never made a long stay. Saw two young ones able to fly at Mt. William, near Lancefield, beginning of 1869. Old bird found some insect attached to pendulous eucalypt leaves. Being unable to pull it off, she let her feet go and swung backwards and forwards to wrench it away.

MAGPIE-LARK (*Grallina picata*).—Continues to breed at Redstone Hill. I find it distributed over a large area of Victoria. As an insectivorous bird to me it seems to be unrivalled. It should be rigorously protected. Under no circumstances have I known it to attack fruit. If undisturbed it seems to court the society of man, for in pines not 30 yards from the back door of my sister's house near Drouin a pair are in the habit of nesting annually. Besides this Magpie-Lark a Black-and-White Fantail, a Harmonious Shrike-Thrush, and a Yellow-rumped Acanthiza nested in the same clump of pines.

GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH (*Collyriocincla harmonica*).—A constant visitor on Jackson's Creek, never in numbers; appears to remain throughout winter and spring. Probably breeds; if so, never saw its nest. If undisturbed becomes very tame. A Thrush came about and picked up scraps just outside the door at Redstone Hill. One day the bird, seizing a piece of entrail, laid it on the end of a loose rail and pulled at fat. Not finding the hold good it moved the entrail to a splintered end of the rail, where it held, and the bird pulled off the morsel.

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Graucalus melanops*).—A constant visitor; has nested at Redstone Hill. This bird devours grapes.

BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Micræca fascians*).—Fairly frequent. Called the "Peter-peter" bird, from its sweet call.

RED-CAPPED ROBIN (*Petræca goodenovii*).—This species was rare, a male and female being always in company in Glencoe sheoaks. It used to be found on Bolinda station, in Fenton Hill sheoaks. The very last one noted was on Lockton estate, near Bulla, in May, 1891, amongst white box scrub that had grown from stumps of felled trees.

FLAME-BREADED ROBIN (*Petræca phanicea*).—From 1846 to 1906 a constant visitor, arriving with us about the last week in March or the first week in April. The Flame-breasted males, with their lady followers, do not seem to appear in such numbers on the area as they did formerly. I do not think this is due to a diminishing of numbers, but is owing to the fact that agriculture has extended their feeding grounds, consequently they spread about more than they used to do. I never knew this Robin to nest in our vicinity.

SCARLET-BREADED ROBIN (*Petræca leggii*).—Visits the old squatting stations yet, but never at any time numerous. A pair, male and female, was seen in 1906. This is a very ornate bird, with a red breast, black back, white cap, and white on wings.

PINK-BREADED ROBIN (*Petræca rhodinogastra*).—During the winter of 1854 a Robin, one solitary bird, took up its quarters in a small patch of scrub on Jackson's Creek. To the best of recollection its back was blue-black, while the breast was a claret red, and it had very little white above nostrils. I saw a bird of the same kind at Mt. Macedon. They are scrub-loving birds.

HOODED ROBIN (*Petræca bicolor*).—On Redstone Hill and Glencoe for years it could be met with at any time. Its favourite haunt was in sheoaks—never seen out of them. But the wholesale destruction of casuarinas apparently affected a change in former habits. The last pair noted on Emu Creek was close to the water's edge. Never saw their nests, yet no doubt they bred with us.

BLUE WREN (*Malurus cyaneus*).—Ever present. Judging from long

observation this bird has increased. At Diggers' Rest, one mile from Jackson's Creek, they nested in a boxthorn hedge at the back of a house. On the Creek Blue Wrens are very tame—pick up crumbs about the yard, pick meat off bones, and if no person is about, and a door be left open, boldly enter a room. Have caught them and clipped their tails, when it was found that they came again as usual.

BLACK-AND-WHITE FANTAIL (*Rhipidura tricolor*).—This species has a very wide range. In Riverina it is known as the "Shepherd Bird." Always to be seen at Jackson's Creek, and continues to nest there. An albino once took up its quarters in garden. We as young folks were very proud of this unique bird, but one day its feathers were discovered: the rascally house cats had destroyed it.

WHITE-SHAFTED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albiscapa*).—Still constant, though I never knew it to breed with us. Once saw its nest on Mt. Macedon, not far from Camel's Hump.

SHINING FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra nitida*).—I have fallen in with not more than half a dozen. It is a rare bird, is only seen while the migrating season lasts, and is found singly in tall trees.

RESTLESS FLYCATCHER (*Sisura inquieta*).—From 1846 and some years later this bird was frequently met with, though not numerous. It disappeared prior to 1860. My duties as rabbit inspector at Gisborne for two years took me over every inch of that shire, and I was at Newham for some months. Throughout, in the careful exploration of both localities, I never located a *Sisura*. Going by two years ago one bird was seen at Redstone Hill.

GROUND-THRUSH (*Geocichla lunulata*).—Though continually moving about Jackson's Creek after Ducks or fish, it was not till 1870, as near as can be minded, that this handsome bird became known to us. Since then it has shown itself rarely. I have chanced on solitary Ground-Thrushes on those parts of the stream where small patches of scrub still exist near the edge of the water. The 1870 specimen was pronounced by Mr. W. J. S. Bowie to be the same species that frequented the Yarra near the Asylum when his father had charge of that institution. In all I do not suppose over half a dozen have appeared since 1870, one of which was taken in a rabbit trap. The scrubs of Mt. Macedon are haunted by this bird, for in my explorations there it has been frequently met with.

SATIN BOWER-BIRD (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*).—This with us in early times could be put down as a frequent bird, appearing in autumn or early winter months, and on rare occasions made a long stay. The last at Redstone Hill was in 1851, when a small party arrived, amongst which was a mature blue-black male bird, the first seen on the place. Since 1851 this Bower-Bird has not visited the area, neither has it to my knowledge been met with in the region round about. The Hurst family, on the old cattle station at Diamond Creek, not far from Melbourne, 40 years ago informed me that the Bower-Birds visited that line of country, where they attacked fruit.

EMU-WREN (*Stipiturus malachurus*).—Rather out of bounds; only seen once, at Bald Hill, in rushy grass. Noticed in swampy covers at Mt. Macedon.

LITTLE GRASS-BIRD (*Megalurus gramineus*).—An occasional bird. The grass swamp, where it lives, when wind-stirred, gives forth a weird sound, but if the weather is dull and this bird gives forth its plaintive whistle the two combined are quite melancholy.

SHORT-BILLED TREE-TIT (*Smicronis brevirostris*).—From 1846 up to about 1854 a permanent, in parties of four or five, never numerous; and

once found its domed nest with tiny brownish eggs. It was a fluttering feeder, kept on with a chirp sounding like "Dit dit," and then for such a mite it called out shrilly "Chee-wee-sheer." In or about 1855 it left, and though investigating closely I have failed to locate the bird since. Not in Gisborne, Bulla, or Newham Shires.

YELLOW-RUMPED TIT (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*).—From 1846 to 1906 has held its own, but to my mind is not so numerous as it was formerly. It appears to court the society of man, seeing that it is given to nest in garden shrubs. It is famous for destroying aphids and small insects in and out of gardens.

BROWN TIT (*Acanthiza pusilla*).—This bird was always with us, found amongst eucalypts, but it is only occasionally seen now.

LITTLE TIT (*Acanthiza nana*).—We gave a bird the name of Chit Chit to distinguish it from *Acanthiza pusilla*. It was probably this species.

LITTLE FIELD-WREN (*Chthonicola sagittata*).—Came very rarely, only in seasons when creek flats were well grassed; rose with a song, and if post or dead tree was near pitched on it. Evidently it bred with us. Have not seen it for years.

SCRUB-WREN (*Sericornis osculans*).—Has always been a permanent of Jackson's Creek, and before the gold-diggings saw one feeding a bulky young bird. Calling my father's attention, on beholding the fledgling he decided it was a Cuckoo.

SPOTTED GROUND-BIRD (*Cinclosoma punctatum*).—Found at Mt. William, near Lancefield, and in Newham Shire. It was styled the Ground-Pigeon.

BABBLER (*Pomatorhinus temporalis*).—A party lived in Glencoe sheoaks. This bird had its habitat in sheoak country, for it was never found where eucalypts were the prevailing timber. Since the almost total destruction of sheoaks this bird has taken to eucalyptian tracts. Noted it in Brodie's Forest; the last time was on Emu Creek, in 1901, and about same period a small party was observed on the highlands at Mickleham, near Deep Creek.

STRIATED FIELD-WREN (*Calamanthus fuliginosus*).—This natty bird, with greenish-tinted plumage, cocked tail, shy habits, and most agreeable warbling voice, has ever been a permanent. Found of old on part of run called "Brock's Bottom," where there were some loose rocks, with a few bushes. Apparently it has increased, for now we find it about stone walls, in which it takes refuge when alarmed. Never under any circumstances has it been seen close to watercourses.

WHITE-FRONTED CHAT (*Ephthianura albifrons*).

WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE (*Gymnorhina leuconota*).—Has always held its own. Up to the time the Sunbury Industrial Schools were established 3,000 or more birds used to come to roost in a clump of box trees close to our house. The boys at the school began snaring them, as the result of which they were greatly thinned out. They were often shot off their perches at night by visitors. On bright moonlight nights they camped in low trees; when nights were dark they selected tall ones. In summer, if a morning proved hot, numbers would remain all day under the shade, singing merrily and playing with each other. In the afternoon they went to the open country to the west of the creek. In later times, as a fair amount of tree-planting has been done, they live more dispersedly than formerly. A pair nested in a tree beneath a bedroom window of the Diggers' Rest Hotel. The landlord never disturbed them; but one time a thoughtless person from Melbourne, seeing two young birds in the garden, shot them. I am informed that Magpies started to build on semaphores at Diggers'

Rest, amongst other materials using clippings of insulator wires. Such structures being a nuisance, they were destroyed. My son found a nest at Woodend North placed on a tree stump, in a natural hollow. There we find both Black-backed (*G. tibicen*) and White-backed Magpies. In olden days about Sunbury Magpies did not eat flesh meat; now if the carcass of a sheep is strychnined one is sure to find dead Magpies around it. About the Sunbury country I have not known them to touch fruit of any description, but Mr. Shaw says at Tandara, near Bendigo, they eat ripe figs. Hitherto the only damage they did at Sunbury was to occasionally pull up sprouting corn, and they only did so when the season was dry. *Gymnorhina leuconota* is a bird remarkable in a number of ways. Much could be said about it. I will confine myself to saying that much can be learnt from them when kept in captivity. When fledglings are handled they void excreta. A pet Magpie kept by us stood in mortal terror of a slain hare or even its skin, and, if we followed up the bird with one or the other, it began to excrete. From that it is safe to assume that fear is the cause of young birds' behaviour when pulled out of a nest. It is common enough to find oval-shaped balls composed of the detritus of various insects. Once we thought such were excrement, but one day our bird was seen to eject one of these balls from its mouth. This bird had a wonderful memory. A hare was hung up in the kitchen; on seeing it she took a great fright, and ever after that never entered that apartment without first making a careful scrutiny from the door. With her clipped wing she managed to scramble up a quince tree to roost. One moonlight night, hearing our pet screaming, I ran down the garden, when she was found on the ground. Ever after that she would come up to be placed on a cross beam in the kitchen or on the branch of a small willow alongside a chimney.

BUTCHER-BIRD (*Cracticus destructor*).—Still visits, though never knew it to nest with us. Saw nest near Lancefield, also young taken at Gisborne.

SHRIKE-TIT (*Falunculus frontatus*).—This was a rare bird about Redstone Hill, but commoner in the box forests.

REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus australis*).—Has always been a summer visitor, and nests.

WHITE-THROATED THICKHEAD (*Pachycephala gutturalis*).—Somewhat rare, and never saw more than a single one at a time.

RUFOUS-BREASTED THICKHEAD (*Pachycephala rufiventris*).—Not common. I think it nests on our place.

WHITE-BROWED TREE-CREEPER (*Climacteris leucophaea*).—Occasionally by the creek.

BROWN TREE-CREEPER (*Climacteris scandens*).—In former days always found with us, away from water, in the timber; it has now been scattered about the plains. One was in the habit of roosting in the butt of a green tree hollowed out with fire. We caught it at night. I think it clung to roost in an upright position.

ORANGE-WINGED TREE-RUNNER (*Sittella chrysoptera*).—A permanent in 1846 and for some years later, mostly in sheoaks in small flocks. A good 50 years have gone since this bird was seen, the trees having been removed.

WHITE-SHOULDERED CATERPILLAR-EATER (*Lalage tricolor*).—Can be called rare. Generally a pair lived, and I think nested, in the box trees in the valley where we lived.

SPINEBILL (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*).—We were resident a good while on our station before a Spinebill appeared. It was always uncommon with us. While at Gisborne for two years I discovered its favourite haunt was amongst blossoming heath. On examination I saw that in order to extract honey it pierced the heath flowers just above their bases.

WARTY-FACED HONEY-EATER (*Meliphaga phrygia*).—We were many years on the area before this bird appeared. It yet comes occasionally in small flocks. Have met it near Gisborne, at Newham on timbered slopes, and beyond M'IVOR. The metallic clinking notes of this bird fall pleasantly on the ear.

WHITE-NAPED HONEY-EATER (*Melithreptus lunulatus*).—Formerly permanent on the block, now very rare. Two years ago a small party appeared on the old location. Immature birds have a chestnut-coloured cap.

BROWN-HEADED HONEY-EATER (*Melithreptus brevirostris*).—Was apparently permanent, and used to nest with us. As a bird its plumage has no beauty.

WHITE-BEARDED HONEY-EATER (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*).—This handsome bird with black and white striped plumage, yellow on wings, with beard-like feathers on throat, was always seen when honeysuckles were in flower.

HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis auricomis*?).—This bird was the rarest of Honey-eaters, for I can only remember one visit of a very large flock during the fifties. They had seemingly massed together for the purpose of taking a long journey, which doubtless tired them out, seeing they were very tame, and one was knocked over with a stick. They were in the thick sheoaks on top of Redstone Hill. They made no stay.

WHITE-PLUMED HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis penicillata*).—Plentiful in 1850, but now in diminished numbers, owing, no doubt, to destruction of timber along the creek. A quarrelsome customer amongst other small birds, and when one is creeping on Black Ducks it raises alarm cries, on which the Ducks take wing. When flying it seems to sing the words "You very well."

FUSCOUS HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis fusca*).—In 1884 one was shot on Emu Creek. Plumage plain. In Brodie's Forest there was a bird, not numerous, whose call was "Arig-arig-a-taw-taw," a Honey-eater not unlike the above.

SINGING HONEY-EATER (*Ptilotis sonora*).—Calls "Put, put," then gives a "Chir-r-r-r." We had been on the place some time before my father noticed it as a great rarity in 1846. Thereafter it became common, but in the end almost disappeared. At present on Jackson's Creek it is among the rarest of birds. The last one observed was two years ago, in the old fruit garden.

FRIAR-BIRD (*Philemon corniculatus*).—On one or two occasions a single bird appeared. They were numerous on the Plenty River, where, as a very small lad, I mind them making a great noise after a Hawk.

RED WATTLE-BIRD (*Acanthochara carunculata*).—Still in evidence; appears in winter, sometimes in good numbers, and on occasions will yet nest in the old locality.

BRUSH WATTLE-BIRD (*Acanthochara mellivora*).—An extremely rare bird, and has not been met with for a great number of years. As boys our name for it was "Charcoal Jack."

NOISY MINER (*Myzantha garrula*).—Not about Redstone Hill or Glencoe till comparatively recent times, when it appeared rarely. Some two seasons back a few came, made a long stay, and possibly nested.

BELL MINER (*Manorhina melanophrys*).—Very common on Jackson's Creek in 1846; gradually diminished, and the last half-dozen flew up stream as if bent on a journey, about March, 1854. From that date this bird has never revisited the region. Met with it on lower Campaspe in November, 1861. Heard it on Hughes's Creek, at Avenel, in 1844. Mr. W. Westgarth says it was on the Yarra at Richmond in 1840. I did not meet with it again until in Gippsland recently.

WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops corvulescens*).—This tame little bird was always a regular visitor, coming in a party that kept together. Occasionally it nested on the Jackson's Creek.

MISTLETOE-BIRD (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*).—Three or four years back for the first time I saw this handsome bird on the old holding. The various eucalypts scattered around bore mistletoes not a few, some remarkably fine ones. As youths we were always on the quest, yet, curious to relate, we never saw a Mistletoe-Bird.

RED-TIPPED PARDALOTE (*Pardalotus ornatus*).—Once common; still appears occasionally. It used to nest with us.

SPOTTED PARDALOTE (*Pardalotus punctatus*).—Once frequent and nesting, but it disappeared in later years, though odd ones may still appear.

WELCOME SWALLOW (*Hirundo neoxena*).—With respect to visits, nesting, and numbers the same as it was 60 years ago.

TREE-SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon nigricans*).—Came to breed annually. Sparrows, with Starlings, have appropriated the few hollow spouts on my area, with the result that we never see this bird.

FAIRY MARTIN (*Petrochelidon ariel*).—Came to breed occasionally. In later years its visits seem more frequent. Latterly several nests under Bulla bridge, others under arch of stone culvert. Nested under eaves of huts in Riverina, but ants killed the young soon as hatched.

SWIFT (*Chatura caudacuta*).—Never a year passed without seeing them. Have seen them as early in the year as 23rd January. Some of my people asserted that they once saw these birds perched on stones.

PIPIT (*Anthus australis*).—Always in evidence, and has increased, owing to forest lands being cleared.

BUSH-LARK (*Mirafra horsfieldi*).—This Lark could not have been on the 15,000 acres of old, because if it had it could not have escaped our notice. First saw it at Newham about 1890, when its curious pepper and salt marked eggs were discovered. At times it comes to Redstone Hill, where it is recognisable by its peculiar jerky flight and its singing.

BROWN SONG-LARK (*Cinchorhamphus cruralis*).—A frequent visitor in good seasons; comes to breed. We dubbed it the "Cock-tailed Lark." On occasions this bird is fairly numerous.

SPOTTED-SIDED FINCH (*Staganopleura guttata*).—This handsome Finch always to be found in small parties, yet with us never numerous. Bred on the place, and in one instance knew them to construct a winter roosting nest, into which the little fellows crowded at night. Disappeared for a long time, then lately some returned for a brief space. Noted at Woodlands, near Bulla, also at Gisborne.

RED-BROWED FINCH (*Aegintha temporalis*).—At Redstone Hill in 1846, and for many years, this bird in numbers far exceeded the former species. After nesting time it mustered in a large flock of perhaps 100 birds. Still present, but in diminished numbers; has ceased to be permanent, and has become a visitor only on Jackson's Creek. Have often seen its nests in former days seized by introduced Sparrows.

CHESTNUT-EARED FINCH (*Taniopygia castanotis*).—This Finch was never indigenous in my part of Victoria, and only visited the area under consideration once during the fifties, and in that instance in large numbers. It would be in the spring season, because it bred and we took young ones. I met it again in Riverina in the summer of 1865, when surface pools were all dried up. They came in numbers to drink water placed out for them in an old frying-pan, and it was amusing to watch the little fellows slaking their thirst.

WOOD-SWALLOW (*Artamus sordidus*).—A few still come to breed; they came in swarms at intervals.

WHITE-BROWED WOOD-SWALLOW (*Artamus superciliosus*).—Not seen in later times on the old location. They came with the Sordid, and about 1850 Glencoe sheoaks were alive with both sorts, and many nests. Once saw a Masked Wood-Swallow (*A. personatus*) at Newham.

PICARIAN BIRDS.

LAUGHING JACKASS (*Dacelo gigas*).—In 1846 and thereafter permanently on the creek. Mr. E. Page, blaming them for taking eggs, shot some. Seemingly they deserted our line of creek then, returning again within the last few years; have nested in hollow spouts. This bird, about Newham and Lancefield district, appears to have increased. Never saw it killing snakes, while from the sharp eye it keeps on the corn stacks feel sure it destroys mice.

SACRED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon sanctus*).—Formerly constant, one pair nesting in a white box tree for long years. Never seen now.

AZURE KINGFISHER (*Alcyone azurea*).—Never plentiful. Found a nest once, drilled in face of earthy bank. Apparently extinct on Jackson's Creek now.

PALLID CUCKOO (*Cuculus pallidus*).—Hardly a season passed without getting a sight of it or hearing its call.

FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*).—Saw it on the area frequently.

BRONZE-CUCKOO (*Chalcococcyx plagusus*).—An occasional visitor. Wanton destruction of birds sometimes goes on when town lads are up for the day with guns. One morning I found a hat thrown in the creek with its band decorated with the wings of six distinct species of birds, amongst them those of a Bronze-Cuckoo and a beautiful Grass-Parrakeet.

COCKATOO AND PARROT FAMILY.

BLACK COCKATOO (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*).—From 1846 to say 1850 a constant visitor on Jackson's Creek, which it followed down in quest of wattle grubs. Last seen on Emu Bottom, some three or four miles up stream. Of recent years saw one near Gisborne, and lately heard it is found in the forest country between Bullengarook West and Mt. Macedon. Old teamsters stated it was a precursor of bad weather.

BANKSIAN COCKATOO (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*).—Two on Redstone Hill about 1849; one shot.

WHITE COCKATOO (*Cacatua galerita*).—An irregular visitant, generally in large flocks. Formerly its diet was divers forms of roots, but when tillage commenced and variegated thistles appeared it changed. In agricultural regions, where this bird is persecuted, self-preservation has become the rule, for on thistled and cultivated areas sentries are placed around. These are relieved, one leaving his mates to take the place of the sentry, which returns to the mob. About Sunbury three or four prospectors would come about for a few days, then go away, and before the week was out the main flock appeared. If their roosting places are found shots can be had soon after nightfall. The common and the variegated thistles were quite unknown in the Sunbury district until the latter was noted in 1847 at Main's, now Flemington Bridge; the former at Redstone Hill in 1850.

ROSE-BREADED COCKATOO (*Cacatua roseicapilla*).—About 1882 saw two or three. Regarded them as escapees from captivity. After that four were shot, which, on examination, showed that each had had a wing clipped

before feathers had reached maturity. In 1901 saw a brace in a tall red gum below our house. This pair, from their actions, looked as if they had always lived in freedom, but it would not do to assert that they really had. Mr. John Hillary, a sharp observer, said that Galahs appeared at Greenvale, not far from Broadmeadows, during the year of the bad drought up North, but that season was a splendid one down South. These birds would be genuine visitors.

COCKATOO-PARRAKEET (*Calopsittacus novaehollandiae*).—Not seen till 1853, about the beginning of summer, when sheoaks on Emu Creek were literally alive with them, and a few years later some visited our place, when specimens were obtained. In 1870, my brothers stated the species was numerous at Lancefield, also that it bred there. Met with some at Newham.

BETCHERRYGAH (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).—Noted a small flock at Redstone Hill about 1850; probably seven years later in droves at Brodie's 5-Mile, near Fenton Hill (Bolinda Vale).

ROSELLA (*Platycercus eximius*).—Ever a permanent, but got scarce for a while. They nested on the place. Owing to extension of tillage Rosellas have now greatly increased.

CRIMSON PARRAKEET (*Platycercus elegans*).—Once permanent, but now met with in Gisborne, Newham, and Lancefield only. The wholesale or partial destruction of timber drives this species away.

BLUE-BELLIED LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus novaehollandiae*).—Only a visitant; last seen at Redstone Hill about 1883, when it attacked fruit. Very common once on Conagaderer Creek, between Fenton Hill and Deep Creek, where it fed on honeysuckle blossoms.

KING LORY (*Aprosmictus cyanopygius*).—A very rare casual, one at a time, in immature plumage, being seen. Many years ago one came, a very wild bird, with tail only a ragged stump. There is a possibility that this Lory wears down its tail when nesting.

GREEN-LEEK PARRAKEET (*Polytelis barrabandi*).—A few came once. The white box country in Melton region I conclude was their favourite resort. Noted a brace there end of 1870. Mr. W. P. Best ten or twelve years later secured a pair about Bacchus Marsh. Noted a few in tree near Black Gully when going to Lancefield many years ago.

BLUE-WINGED GRASS-PARRAKEET (*Neophema venusta*).—Generally to be found in a small party. This Parrakeet might be counted rare; saw a few quite recently. Never knew it to nest in my part.

RED-BACKED PARRAKEET (*Psephotus hamatonotus*).—None known for long years on area, and first observed on Glenara estate, near Bulla, in 1870, after which it appeared at Redstone Hill occasionally. Some noted in 1884. Not observed of late years. This Parrakeet was very common in the north of the State and in Riverina.

MUSKY LORIKEET (*Glossopsittacus concinnus*).—Always on the scene when eucalypts are in flower. Comes to the place yet to devour fruit. Seems to know when it is fit.

LITTLE LORIKEET (*Glossopsittacus pusillus*).—A very frequent visitor in small lots. Seems very affectionate, but has not visited the old locality for long years.

SWIFT LORIKEET (*Nanodes discolor*).—A frequent visitant. Some two years ago a large party came. Seems to diet extensively on the white waxy scales that abound on the leaves of the yellow box (eucalypt). Those scales have a sugary taste; a small, soft insect is concealed under them.

PURPLE-CROWNED LORIKEET (*Glossopsittacus porphyrocephalus*).—One instance only where identity established. This bird was amongst the recent Swift Lorikeets. The writer has a recollection of taking Purple-crowned Lorikeets on Redstone Hill long years ago.

GAME BIRDS.

WILD TURKEY OR BUSTARD (*Eupodotis australis*).—In 1846 and years after abundant. Once counted 28 fly across from Redstone Hill to Glencoe sheoaks. The late Mr. Edward Page said they laid a single egg on the bare ground. Shot a brace about a third grown, and as they were quite by themselves concluded they were one clutch. This noble bird on the old area now the rarest. It may be counted extinct on plains south of Mt. Macedon. In 1869 saw a brace near Lancefield, winging south; previous to which year I never had seen these birds flying at such a high rate of speed. Hard seasons in the interior (1869 was bad) causes Turkeys, with other birds, to head southwards. My Riverina experience proved that a severe drought plays havoc with Bustards and Emus. The former died of sheer starvation; the latter became so weak that they could not get out of the way of a sheep dog.

SOUTHERN STONE-PLOVER (*Burhinus grallarius*).—In 1846 and for some years after permanent on the area, but nowadays casual. Before 1850 found a nest of two eggs on the bare ground. A visit shortly after proved the eggs had disappeared. Perhaps the bird had removed them or Ravens had destroyed them. Towards 1870 found two young ones on our land.

BLACK-BREASTED PLOVER (*Zonifer tricolor*).—In former days exceedingly numerous. The old squatters in our vicinity let them alone, but later on people began shooting them, with the result that they became scarce. Of late years they have increased somewhat.* As regards this Plover, closer settlement does not seem to affect it seriously, because it continues to breed in the old location.

SPUR-WINGED PLOVER (*Lobivanellus lobatus*).—Always rare on Redstone Hill, Glencoe, and Koorakoorakup. Out of bounds, when Melton swamps are full, we find it in small parties. When good seasons prevailed in Riverina the Spur-wing was fairly plentiful in the immediate vicinity of swamps. Doubtless it bred there.

STUBBLE QUAIL (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—Of old a few strictly permanent, at varying cycles very numerous, then years might elapse without seeing a bird. In later times they have frequently visited the old area. Quail are not migrants in the real sense of the word, for my conclusion is that they merely shift about, and I think they travel at night. Before 1860, passing over an adjoining farm after nightfall, heard more Quail-calls than ever heard before or since. A few days after,

* This autumn a sportsman reported seeing a large flock of several hundreds near Deep Creek.—EDS.

thinking to make a bag, I visited the spot, with the result that not a bird was to be seen. Probably they had come the previous night, rested for the day, and when darkness fell began calling for a fresh start.

BROWN QUAIL (*Synœcus australis*).—Was permanent in small coveys on Jackson's Creek for long years. It totally disappeared from the old haunt, but some two or three seasons back I noticed a few near our old homestead. From this it will be noted that it is rare.

PAINTED QUAIL (*Turnix varia*).—Taken on Redstone Hill in 1854. The ones here (Drouin) are its exact counterpart. This single bird, found amongst bracken ferns, was the only one met with on the area.

LITTLE QUAIL (*Turnix velox*).—Whenever we have an extra good season this handsome bird appears, when it is seen on grass lands or growing crops.

COLLARED PLAIN-WANDERER (*Pedionomus torquatus*).—Evidently permanent; appeared very scarce; nevertheless, coloration, combined with habits, being so highly protective, possibly it was more plentiful than supposed to be. During my 60 odd years' experience on the three sheep-runs I have not seen half a dozen birds. The first was brought to us by our shepherd in the later forties. The next was taken about the middle fifties. Cattle putting up the bird, the grass being short, it was marked down and captured. When taken, curious to relate, it could not be induced to take flight, and all it did was to march about, occasionally extending its wings. It may be ten years since Mr. H. Coburn was seen with a living specimen taken on Rockbank station. In 1852 we found a nest with eggs, peg-top shaped; we did not sight the bird, but afterwards heard that they were those of the Collared Plain-Wanderer.

BLACK DUCK (*Anas superciliosa*).—Once common on our line of Jackson's Creek, where we found its nests, but of late years a rare visitor on that stream.

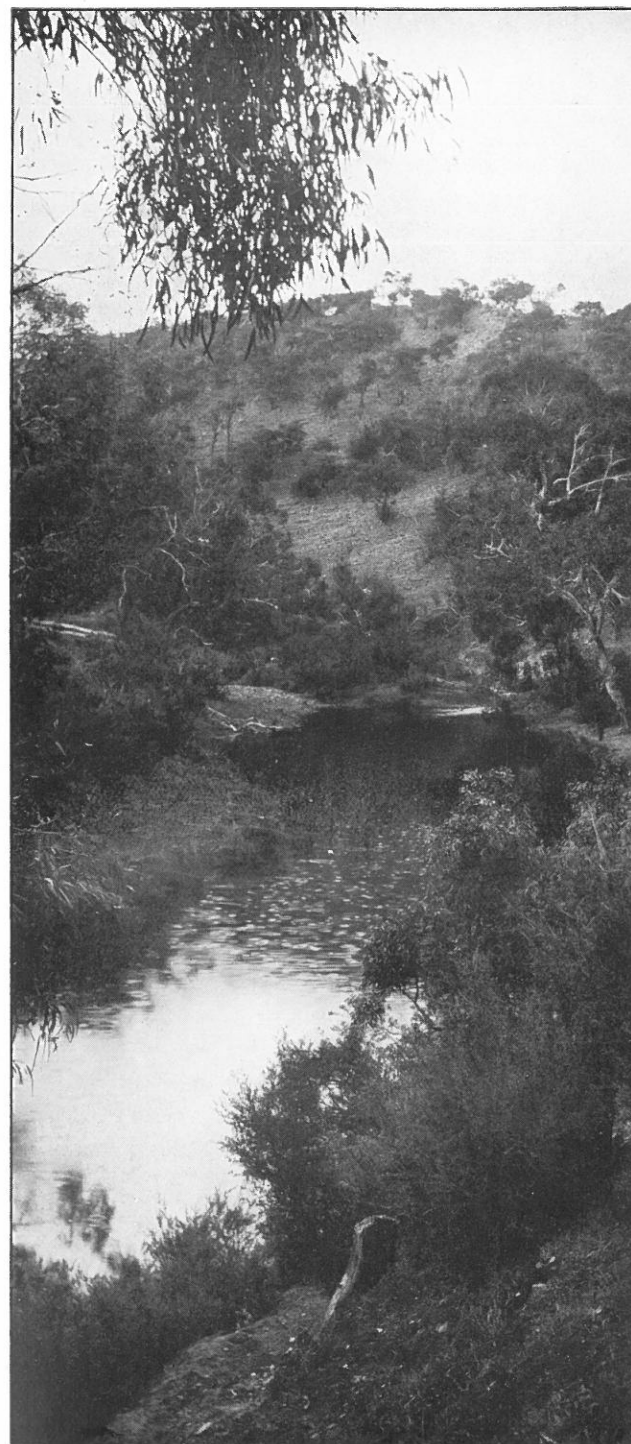
WOOD-DUCK (*Chenonetta jubata*).—Ever a casual, at times making a considerable stay, and still appears at odd times.

PINK-EARED DUCK (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*).—One found on the creek about 1857. Very common in Riverina.

GREY TEAL (*Nettion gibberifrons*).—Always somewhat rare on the creek. Odd wing-weary birds still drop in. Exceedingly numerous in good seasons in Riverina, and nests.

SHOVELLER (*Spatula rhynchotis*).—An extremely rare visitor on the creek, not noted till 1854, when deluging rains in March of that year brought up swarms of Ducks, amongst them a few Shovellers. In that incursion were Black Ducks and Wood-Ducks, but the great majority were Teal. Three years ago two brace of Shoveller, in company with as many Teal, visited us.

WHITE-EYED DUCK (*Nyroca australis*).—In 1855 or 1856 I first saw this Duck on Jackson's Creek; since then it has been very rare. The bulge at the lower end of this bird's windpipe is far larger than that of any Duck that I am acquainted with.



MOUNTAIN-DUCK (*Casarca tadornoides*).—Out of bounds on Melton swamps; two shot.

BRONZE-WING PIGEON (*Phaps chalcoptera*).—Came down Jackson's Creek about end of summer, but in the winter of 1854 were in sheoaks on Redstone Hill in goodly numbers. They moved down stream to Keilor or beyond. The late Mr. Edward Winter, who began farming there in 1843, used to shoot Bronze-wings about the site of the present township. Used to be very numerous on Koorakoorakup and Emu Bottom, on which last the late Mr. John William Page stated he bagged 30 in the course of a day. This Pigeon nested with us. Now it is very rare indeed.

BRUSH BRONZE-WING (*Phaps elegans*).—A brace only were known, about ten or twelve years back. I saw the chief distinction between it and common Bronze-wing was a liver-coloured patch on breast. Have seen this Pigeon on Mt. Macedon in thick scrubs where about the only chance of seeing the bird is when it crosses a track.

SNIFE (*Gallinago australis*).—Prior to 1850 Mr. Tom Perry bagged one, the only true Snipe to my knowledge that ever halted on our creek. There is a small Snipe-like bird on Melton swamps—that is, when they contain water. This bird goes in flocks, keeps in the open by the water's edge, occasionally stands on the half-submerged stones so close together that I have known nine to be knocked over at one shot.*

Occasionally birds of the Sandpiper tribe have appeared, but they were very rare. It is impossible for me to say what kinds they were.

OTHER AQUATIC BIRDS.

PECTORAL RAIL (*Hypotaenidia philippinensis*).—Frequented Jackson's Creek; bred there, because I have seen young, unfledged birds. This Rail is a beautifully-marked bird: it yet appears as a rare casual.

WHITE-HEADED STILT (*Himantopus leucocephalus*).—Shot on Melton swamps and at Woodend North.

RED-NECKED AVOCET (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*).—Seen once only, on swampy spot on Bulla road. In this instance one bird, but when Melton swamps were full I have seen them there.

CURLEW (*Numenius cyanopus*).—A specimen was once shot at Woodend North, presumably an accidental bird that had dropped out of the migratory flocks for some reason.

MOOR-HEN (*Gallinula tenebrosa*).—Found lots of their nests in swamp bushes in Riverina, built a few inches above water. The Pink-eyed Duck nests under similar conditions. Shot a Moor-Hen at Woodend North, the first and only one observed so far south. There is a dam at Woodend North, covering two acres fully, close to Mt. Alexander road, and on this water storage aquatic birds frequently are found.

BALD-COOT (*Porphyrio melanonotus*).—In 1854 one was taken on the creek; another shot later on. This is a very rare bird, but I have frequently seen it at Melton swamps.

* Doubtless *Heteropygia acuminata* (Sharp-tailed Stint).—EDS.



COOT (*Fulica australis*).—Every large pool on Jackson's Creek, provided it had a good fringe of reeds, had one or two Coots. For years they were permanent; from personal observation nowadays they are not even the rarest of casuals.

MARSH TERN (*Hydrochelidon hybrida*).—Seen at Woodend North, where it was noted that this bird when alighting has a peculiar graceful action in folding its long wings. Having pitched on the ground the wings are extended upwards, then the pinions are shut down, after which both wings are closed. My theory is that it is done to prevent injury to the wings, for it appeared to me if not closed in that fashion they would strike the ground.

STRAW-NECKED IBIS (*Gevonticus spinicollis*).—My first acquaintance with this bird was on the Murrumbidgee River, near Hay, in the sixties. In 1869 we had a terrible drought on Keilor Plains. No doubt this visitation was very severe up north, because Ibis, with some Wild Turkeys, were in evidence. Just about Christmas time, 1868, we had to move a flock of sheep to Mt. William, near Lancefield, where the animals remained till midwinter. One day a large flock of Ibis was seen wending south; from my Riverina experience they were identified. However, in 1866, Mr. Thos. Kissock, on whom my father called one day, was out with his gun; presently he returned with a pair of birds, no doubt utter strangers to him, seeing that he remarked—"They look very like Whaups" (the Scottish name for seashore Curlews). As the adjacent runs would be known to Mr. Kissock for close on 25 years, it seems clear that during all those years he had never seen an Ibis till then. Since 1869 we may count Ibis as frequent visitors in the Sunbury district, but in all cases their visits, in my opinion, are not the result of droughts up north. They must have largely increased since aborigines disappeared, consequently, the supply of food being overlapped, necessity has compelled them to travel. In late years they have visited Redstone Hill and roosted there at night. They are common enough at times in the Shire of Newham, where there are some large dams, on which I have witnessed them bathing in warm weather. Once a White Ibis (*Threskiornis stictipennis*) was noted there.

WHITE-FRONTED HERON (*Ardea novæ-hollandiæ*).—A somewhat frequent bird; never numerous; noted away from water, evidently in quest of grasshoppers and other insects.

WHITE-NECKED HERON (*Ardea pacifica*).—The "Curwin" of Delatite aborigines, and may be regarded as a rare bird, seeing we had been years at Sunbury before one was seen.

NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax caledonicus*).—Can be put down as a rare bird on Jackson's Creek. Occasionally an odd one still appears. Years ago the speckled bird was supposed to be a distinct variety, but ornithologists have discovered that it is the immature Nankeen Heron.

BITTERN (*Botaurus poicilopterus*).—Only one instance on our creek, in 1853; then thirty-five years after two were found in Emmeline Vale Swamp, near Old Gisborne; one shot, and its identity established.

SPOONBILL (*Platibus flavipes*).—In 1858 one came to Jackson's Creek. In 1860, early in January, after three days' deluging rain, some of my folks went to inspect Melton swamps, when they found them swarming

with Gulls. A little later I went there to shoot. There were clouds of Ducks—Gulls were gone—but no Spoonbills. In 1895 the late Mr. James M' Ara Mitchell, manager of Rockbank, complained of Melbourne people shooting these inoffensive birds, leaving them lying about the swamps. Have seen Spoonbills on dams in Newham Shire. The water was very muddy; they stalked along, swinging their bills like clock pendulums, in search of insects, &c., beneath the surface.

WHITE EGRET (*Herodias timoriensis*).—One met with on Emu Creek, near Bulla, about 1855.

MUSK-DUCK (*Biziwa lobata*).—One seen years ago on Jackson's Creek. In season of travel have noted up to ten at a time in a dam at Woodend North.

BLACK SWAN (*Chenopsis atrata*).—Somewhat frequently appearing.

SILVER GULL (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*).—When we have storms in winter from the south these Gulls sometimes visit the big dam at Woodend North. This reservoir is 45 miles from Port Phillip.

NATIVE COMPANION (*Antigone australasiana*).—At times seen on Melton Plains, but never in any numbers.

BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax novæ-hollandiæ*).—This bird is an almost constant visitor, generally when the water is clear.

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax stictocephalus*).—Same as above with respect to its visits.

LITTLE CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*).—This, as regards visits, is the same as the other two. Of the three sorts a party hardly goes beyond three or four, sometimes a brace, but more frequently a single bird. Cormorants swarm with intestinal worms, often of large size. These parasites appear to break into the fish as soon as swallowed. Inferentially they accelerate digestion, therefore we may conclude that the presence of the parasites accounts for the bird's voracity. Once fully a dozen birds pitched in a dam at Woodend North. They began working all abreast in an extended line, diving simultaneously. When one rose with a carp it tossed it in the air, caught the fish by the head, and bolted it. The other Cormorants often rushed to rob him. They evidently overgorge, for under roosting trees I have seen ever so many whole fish that they had ejected.

DARTER (*Plotus novæ-hollandiæ*).—One only seen on the creek, and shot. Another killed on a Murrumbidgee lagoon.

PELICAN (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*).—In 1876 one shot on Jackson's Creek and one at Newham. On extremely rare occasions they have been seen in broad daylight flying towards the sea-coast.

GREBE (*Podiceps*, sp.).—Cannot say if it is the Hoary-headed or the Black-throated species; possibly both *P. poliocephalus* and *novæ-hollandiæ* occur. Never knew it to nest.

EMU (*Dromæus novæ-hollandiæ*).—When we arrived at Sunbury, in 1846, Emus were gone, as far as our area was concerned. Tom Harrison, who had come with the Messrs. Jackson to Koorakoorakup in 1836, saw an old bird with 11 young between the present site of the Sunbury Asylum and Bald Hill. The late Mr. Lewis Clarke, who arrived about 1840, stated he ran down one at Fenton Hill (now Bolinda).

HAVE BIRDS FIXED ROUTES IN MIGRATION?—In March last a Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*), that handsome, delicate denizen of the mountain gully, appeared in the garden of the School of Horticulture, Burnley, evidently *en route* from the ranges to its winter haunts in the tropical scrubs of Queensland. On 12th December last year a single bird appeared, and stayed in precisely the same part of the garden for a day or two. It is impossible, of course, to say that this is the same bird, but I suggest that it is, and that it passed the same spot on its outgoing as on its incoming journey. Referring to my note-books I find I have records of solitary specimens of Rufous Fantails in the same locality as far back as the year 1896. All the records are in the months of either November, December, or March.—A. G. CAMPBELL. Melbourne, April, 1907.

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DO BIRDS REASON?—The following anecdote about the Blue Wren suggests to me that they do. About our old homestead, near Sunbury, Blue Wrens were always common and very friendly, being easily attracted to the very doorstep by throwing out a few crumbs. One day a fine male appeared in company with his spouse and a brood of young birds. Some scraps of bread were thrown out for them to feed upon. One of the youngsters picked up a largish piece and endeavoured to swallow it. The male, seeing this, quick as lightning dashed in and took it from the other's mouth. Judge my surprise on seeing the parent, instead of swallowing it himself, proceeded to beat it up into small pieces to allow the young one to eat it without the danger of choking itself.—ISAAC BATEY. Drouin, April, 1907.

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ROBINS IN AUTUMN.—On the 17th April, rather later than usual, the Flame-breasted Robin (*Petroeca phanicea*) appeared in numbers in the immediate vicinity of Melbourne, the proportion of red-breasted males in the flocks being about one to twenty. The majority, as is always the case, are either females or immature males, and are of a very deep brown hue, which will in about a fortnight wear to a greyish-brown, more in harmony with the grey soil they love to frequent. A few days later a solitary specimen of *Petroeca rhodinogastra* in brown plumage was observed. I strongly suspect that this species is much more common about the metropolis in winter than is generally supposed, for it is easily mistaken for the female of *P. phanicea*, which it resembles at a distance, but it differs in being smaller, deeper in colour, and with a brownish mark on the wing instead of white, and in frequenting thick growths about the gardens or forest instead of the open country.

I have a note of some negative importance concerning the summer habitat of *Petroeca phanicea*. During an ascent of Mt. William, in the Grampian Mountains, in the western portion of Victoria, an elevation of 3,827 feet above the sea, no Robins at all were seen. This was in March. There were none either in the low country, though later in the year they come about the farmsteads in small flocks. The highlands of eastern Victoria are abundant with the species all through summer, when they are not seen in the lowlands. However, on 8th May, when another visit was paid to the locality, several Flame-breasted Robins were seen about the foot of the mountains, where the stationary species (*P. leggi*) is found all the year round. High up on one of the peaks, at an elevation of 2,500 feet, but in the shelter of a tea-tree gully, I was surprised to meet with a female *P. rhodinogastra*. This is a previously unrecorded species for this area.—A. G. CAMPBELL. May, 1907.

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SOME TASMANIAN BIRDS.—With regard to the suggestions in *The Emu*, vol. vi., page 210—"Why should all Flame-breasted Robins leave lowlands at the approach of spring, and repair to the elevated regions and Tasmania to breed?" What evidence is there that these Robins do migrate? They certainly appear to remain with us all the year. Mr. Hubert Thompson has found six or seven of their nests within a small radius of Launceston, and, as to altitude, the highest would probably be not much over 300 feet above sea level. He has also seen a few pairs in this district in midwinter, but the bulk of them seem to go to our coasts in the autumn, and remain there until next nesting season. It is not at all uncommon at Devonport and Table Cape, on the North-West Coast, to see twenty of these birds feeding in a small paddock, the minority only having the coloured breast, the remainder (hens and young males) being perfectly plain. Mr. Thompson has seen them congregate thus at Georgetown, near the mouth of the Tamar River. At the approach of the warm weather they disperse, and seem to prefer breeding away from the coast. The observations, extending over a number of years, of my friend and self point to the probability of the male of this species not assuming its striking colours until at least the second year, quite probably the third. In their autumn and winter gatherings the sober-tinted birds, as stated, are always in a large majority.

"Why should Kingfishers be absent from Tasmania?" I have frequently seen the beautiful little *Alcyon azurea* on retired streams, which are seldom visited, and do not doubt that it would be much more common were it not shot at sight for its skin—another argument for the speedy imposition of a gun tax. There seems no reason why the *Halcyon sanctus* should not