

owing to the poisoning off of the dingoes and the supplying of regular work and food to the natives.—JOE BRADSHAW, St. Kilda, Victoria.

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SNIFE ON MIGRATION.—I observed two flights of Snipe (*Galinago australis*) passing over Sorrento, going north, on the 25th January. They had evidently crossed Bass Strait from the islands there or from Tasmania. They flew very low for snipe. They seemed to be heading towards Mud Island. I saw them at about 5 a.m., whilst I was making for a distant spot to fish off the rocks facing Bass Strait. There were in the first flight about 20 birds, and in the second lot about 10 or 12, which passed about seven or eight minutes after.—A. MATTINGLEY.

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MIGRATION OF SWIFTS.—A flight of many hundreds of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chætura caudacuta*) passed over Bass Strait on 7th February, apparently from Tasmania, making their way due north. They were flying low and catching insects as they went, and were evidently migrating to the Northern Hemisphere, where they breed. I should be glad to know if any member of the Aust. O.U. has ever seen one of these birds resting either on a tree or on the ground.—D. LE SOUËF.

A severe whirlwind passed through Richmond and Burnley, suburbs of Melbourne, on the afternoon of 24th February, 1902. As it advanced, a party of Swifts was observed circling high up among the *débris* that was drawn up, finding there probably a number of insects caught up in the aerial whirlpool.—A. G. CAMPBELL, Armadale.

From Magazines.

IN the first (January) number of the *Agricultural Journal of Victoria* Mr. Charles French, F.L.S., Government Entomologist, contributes a chatty and useful article on "Economic Entomology and Ornithology," dealing chiefly with the former science, upon which he is so well able to write. He mentions that "the fruit-growers of Victoria and elsewhere are partially indebted for the large increase of insect pests, all and sundry," to so-called sportsmen—"pot-hunters," &c.—who have shot and "still continue to shoot down our valuable insectivorous birds." This is true, but may not the inevitable reclaiming of forested and bush lands for cultivation by orchardists and farmers themselves—thus destroying the natural domains of these birds—have also contributed in some measure to the decrease of valuable insect-eating birds?

The article is followed by another—a very important one—by Mr. French, on "The Necessity for the Preservation of our Insect-destroying Birds," to which is subjoined a list of the principal insectivorous birds of Victoria. It will be noticed that the list contains a few unsuitable and obsolete names, which for educational purposes might now be allowed to drop into oblivion in favour of up-to-date nomenclature. By some inadvertence, too, the Blue Petrel—an ocean flyer, chiefly between the 40° and 60° south latitudes—has been allowed to slip into the list of "insectivorous birds," while it perhaps would be better to let the Whistling (Tree) Duck and the fine Topknot Pigeon (*Lopholæmus antarcticus*) remain on the "Native Game Schedule."

The intention to give a coloured figure of one or other of the most useful insectivorous birds in each number of the *Agricultural Journal* is a good one.

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In the November number of the *Avicultural Magazine* the Rev. H. D. Astley, M.A., F.Z.S., records the interesting fact of a pair of our "Native Companions" having nested in his grounds in England. Although many of these birds are kept in captivity in Europe, this is the first time any of them have made a serious attempt to breed. In May last the pair began to build on the margin of a small lake, but afterwards chose another site a few yards away. Towards the end of May the female laid two eggs, but one of these was stolen and the second removed to be incubated by a farmyard hen, who failed to hatch it. "In eight days' time the Crane laid the first of a second batch of eggs in the same nest as before, omitting, as she had previously done, one day between the production of the first and second eggs. On this second clutch she sat steadily for ten days," when for the second time the eggs were stolen, probably by other birds. "Some ten days after the female bird once more took up her position on the same nest, which she added to slightly and re-arranged. In a fortnight the first egg of a third clutch was laid, which was again followed by another egg two days afterwards. But, alas! after the Crane had sat only a few days the eggs were once more taken. . . . Surely that was the end of all things for the first year of the 20th century. But in August, about a fortnight after this last calamity, the female Australian Crane was once more to be seen re-arranging her nest and sitting on it. And once more this pertinacious and prolific bird laid, for the fourth time of asking, two eggs—quite as fine and large, moreover, as any of their predecessors. These eggs also unfortunately disappeared." As a forcible instance of "reserve fecundity" the foregoing is noteworthy, and when this and the many recorded

instances of Australian birds laying again, sometimes twice, after their eggs have been taken or some accident has befallen the nest, are borne in mind, the arguments of those who object to a few eggs being taken for museum purposes lose much of their weight.

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How five pairs of Warbling Grass-Parrakeets ("Betcherry-gahs") and five pairs of their progeny reared 104 young birds between one February and the next, in an aviary in Essex, is noted by Miss Brampton in the *Avicultural Magazine* for December. She had many failures before getting the birds to breed, and eventually got some "aviary-bred birds of good breeding strain," and in about two months was puzzled to find a stranger in the aviary, and in the course of a week or two twelve grand young birds had made their appearance. "After this," she says, "the youngsters came so thick and fast that they overflowed into my other aviaries until they were overcrowded, and still they came." When the young birds were disposed of the two old pairs retained gave up nesting seriously. As another instance of the fecundity of some Australian birds the above is worth noting. Allowing an average of seven eggs to each clutch, which is probably beyond the mark, and that every egg was fertile, there must have been 15 clutches of eggs laid by these few birds during the year, and as the young birds would not be likely to breed for some months after hatching, the old ones must have done the bulk of the work. Whilst in Adelaide last November visiting members of the Union were shown these pretty Parrakeets breeding in the aviaries of Mr. Mellor, at Fulham.

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THE N.Z. AGRICULTURAL REPORT (1900) states that a number of Magpie Larks (*Grallina*) was obtained from Australia and liberated at Auckland, Hawke's Bay, and Wellington. These birds have since been seen in localities widely separated and at considerable distances from the places at which they were liberated. This seems to indicate that they are establishing themselves in their new land. The importation will be continued. The birds feed exclusively on insects and small snails. Unfortunately, several have been shot by settlers, who possibly did not know the value of these birds as insect-destroyers.

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"NOTES FROM THE LEYDEN (HOLLAND) MUSEUM," VOLS. XXII. and XXIII.—Dr. Otto Finsch has kindly forwarded fourteen of his papers (excerpts from this journal) relating to Australasian sub-regions. The papers will be useful as lists of reference for any member working beyond the Australian

region, and it is very thoughtful of Dr. Finsch to send them to the newly-formed Aust. O.U. The doctor, in his notes on a collection of birds from the north-west coast of New Guinea (Sekru), vol. xxii., p. 62, includes with *Syma torotoro* (Less.) our *S. flavirostris* (Gould). Mr. Hartert, in "Novi Zool.," vi., p. 427 (1899), disagrees with this. Any member with available specimens should note the opinions. Attention is also drawn to *Climacteris scandens* and *C. leucophaea*, vol. xxiii., p. 60, and the names given of four or five species of *Climacteris* which are among the *desiderata* of the Museum. In vol. xxii., p. 276, the old name of *Artamus leucorhynchus* (Linn.) is used, and our *A. leucogaster* is included. Mr. Hartert places our bird as a sub-species, *Artamus leucorhynchus parvirostris*. In the same volume, p. 278, *Pitta elegans* is shown to extend its distribution to Kisser. Again, in the same vol., p. 282, our Northern *Cuculus intermedius* (Vahl.) is noted. According to Dr. Sharpe priority in name is given to Hodgson's *saturatus*, so that our *C. intermedius* (Vahl.) is now *C. saturatus*, Hodg. (Handbook B. M., ii., p. 158, 1900). The Sekru (north-west coast of New Guinea) collection made by Mr. Karl Schädler contains 76 species, of which 20 are Australian.

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A PAMPHLET forwarded by Mr. Reginald C. Robbins, 373 Washington-street, Boston, and bearing the title, "Bird-killing as a Method in Ornithology," is devoted to a laboured argument to prove that killing birds for scientific study is something more than unnecessary. The author claims therein to "have shown that the dead bird differs from the live bird as an object of science by being a chronicle which is the more pitifully insufficient the more precise is its reference to the bird killed," and urges that far more than enough specimens have already been procured for teaching, were the collections merged and made generally available. There is no doubt a great deal of bird life sacrificed in the name of science (some perchance unnecessarily, hence much to be regretted), but Mr. Robbins has hardly chosen the best method of effecting a reform. He takes pedantry for precision in argument, and certainly will not be readily "understood of the people." A simpler statement of the case would have proved more effective.

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MR. A. J. NORTH, in the January issue of the "Records of the Australian Museum" (iv., No. 5, pp. 209, 210), publishes a "Note on *Alalurus leucopterus*, Quoy and Gaimard," which he says "was sent last July to Melbourne for publication in the *Victorian Naturalist*, but was temporarily (?) withdrawn, pending an application to the Western Australian Museum, Perth, for the loan of the type." In this note he mentions that, after referring

to the original drawing and description in the "Zoology and Atlas of the Voyage de l'Uranie," he finds "that Gould had good grounds for doubting if the bird figured and described by him under this name in his 'Birds of Australia' was not distinct from the species to which it had been originally applied by Quoy and Gaimard," and after quoting the description given by the last-named naturalists, says:—"The above diagnosis and description clearly do not apply to the cobalt-blue bird from New South Wales figured and described by Gould, and which in future will have to be distinguished under the name of *Malurus cyanotus*." Since writing the foregoing Mr. North had received a photograph of three specimens (as set up) of the bird collected by Mr. J. T. Tunney on Barrow Island, N.W. Australia, for the Western Australian Museum, and which has been named *M. edouardi*. Concerning these, he says:—"Judging by the description and photograph, these birds are, in my opinion, the true *Malurus leucopterus* of Quoy and Gaimard described 77 years ago." It will be remembered that these three specimens from Barrow Island were exhibited on 11th March, 1901, at a meeting of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria by Mr. A. J. Campbell, who described them* and suggested the new name, and that a photo. from Arago's original drawing of *M. leucopterus* accompanied one of *M. edouardi* on p. 66 of *The Emu*. It had been previously stated (p. 26) that should the black and white Wrens of Barrow and Dirk Hartog Islands eventually prove the same species, Gould's long-standing provisional name of *M. cyanotus* would become the proper one for the blue and white bird. Reference to the photographs will show that there are marked points of distinction between Quoy and Gaimard's *M. leucopterus* and *M. edouardi*, and that it requires some imagination to regard them as identical, the more particularly as the measurements given in the "Voyage de l'Uranie" for *M. leucopterus* are 3 inches 4 lines (not "about 4½ inches," as the paper under notice might lead one to believe), whilst the total lengths of the specimens of *M. edouardi* exhibited in Melbourne were 4.5, 4.5, and 4.75 inches respectively. Is it not, therefore, extremely probable that Mr. North has been somehow led astray? Possibly not having the birds themselves to examine has been a cause of error, and when specimens of both are before him he will possibly reconsider his present decision. In any case, perhaps, it is unfortunate that Mr. North did not give his opinion that Gould's blue and white bird could not refer to Quoy and Gaimard's ancient figure, and that the name *M. cyanotus* must be adopted for the former, before the last-found black and white Wren came on the *tapis*. To be wise after events is like the story of "Columbus and the Egg."

* Vict. Nat., xvii., p. 203.