

a generic name (typographical errors corrected) is distinct from all others not spelled in exactly the same way. Questions of etymology are not pertinent in case of adoption or rejection of names deemed preoccupied. [NOTE.] This canon prohibits change of names because prior names of similar sound or etymology exist. It permits the use of generic names of like origin but of different genders or termination to remain tenable. All manner of confusion has been brought into nomenclature by the change of names because others nearly the same are in use. Thus the Ornithologists' Union sanctions the cancellation of *Eremophila* because of the earlier genus *Eremophilus*, of *Parula* because of the earlier *Parulus*, and of *Helminthophaga* on account of *Heminthophagus*. On the other hand, *Pica* and *Picus* are allowed. In ornithology this matter has been handled by a general agreement on the relatively few cases concerned. But in other groups the matter is by no means simple, and every degree of similarity can be found. Thus the genus *Cantherines* is preceded by *Acanthorhinus*, a correct rendering of the same etymology; *Canthidermis* by *Acanthoderma*, also a correct form of the same word; *Thymallus* is preceded by *Thymalus*, *Lyopsetta* by *Liopsetta*. Rafinesque changes *Hiodon* because it sounds too much like *Diodon*; *Trachidermis* has been altered on account of its resemblance to *Trachyderma*, *Ateleopus* on account of its resemblance to *Atelopus*.

"Between forms like *Pachynathus*, antedated by the correctly spelled *Pachygnathus*, and *Aplodontia*, antedated by the more correct *Haplodon* and *Aplodon*, every sort of case may be found. If all names are regarded as different unless spelled alike, these matters offer no difficulty. Any other view gives no assurance of stability."

Although there are several other points of difference of a very minor nature, I shall close this short abstract with the following well-considered canon, a portion of which, as will be seen, departs considerably from present usage in ornithology and mammalogy.

"Canon XXIX. The authority for a specific or sub-specific name is the first describer of the species or sub-species. A name adopted from manuscripts should be ascribed to the person indicated as author in the original publication, whether this person be the author of the memoir in which the name occurs or not. . . . [NOTE.] This canon deprecates the practice of ascribing to the author of a paper descriptions and names furnished him in courtesy or otherwise by some other author. If a writer ascribes one of his species to someone else, we must take his word for it. Thus the manuscript species of Kuhl and Van Hasselt in the Museum of Leyden, although printed by Cuvier and Valenciennes, should be ascribed to Kuhl and Van Hasselt."

Much of the foregoing is doubtless debatable matter, but the reasons for each proposal are well worth thinking over.

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### Stray Feathers.

NINOX *v.* PODARGUS.—Adverting to a note in *The Emu*, vol. iv., p. 36, I camped at Parwan, Vic., during the last Easter holidays and on the Saturday evening, just as the day was drawing to a close the "Mopokes" began to call. I was too tired to move, but a companion went over to the tree (about 150 paces distant)

and shot the bird as it was calling, and it proved to be a splendid specimen of the Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).—F. E. HOWE. Albert Park (Vic.), 5/5/05.

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PIED MUTTON-BIRDS.—This season I received two black and white Mutton-Birds (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) from Phillip Island, Western Port. One collected by Mr. A. P. Smith, Cowes, instead of the usual uniform dusky plumage, has its cap and throat white; abdomen and under tail coverts, excepting here and there a dusky feather, also white. The wings are white with a few dark patches. The bill is the usual dark colour, but the feet are parti-coloured. The second example was forwarded by Mr. Tom Bergin, San Remo, and may be generally described as having head and neck white and the rest of the plumage mottled sooty-brown and white.—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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EARLY MOULT OF BLUE WRENS (*Malurus*).—At the present time this neighbourhood offers ample ocular demonstration of Blue Wrens discarding their gay summer livery for the winter greys. I have never before known them to moult so early in the year. All the males one sees are half-way or even further through their moult. This means that sometime about midwinter they will regain their full plumage. A casual observer seeing the gaily attired birds at that time is apt to conclude that they had not lost their blue feathers at all during the winter, whereas their appearance in full plumage is accounted for by the moult having taken place very early in the year.\*—GEO. GRAHAM. Scott's Creek (Vic.), 3/3/05.

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“ WHY DOES THE YOUNG CUCKOO EJECT ITS FOSTER-BRETHREN ? ” In reply to Mr. Mattingley's query (*Emu*, vol. iv., p. 172), how does he draw the line between reason and instinct, and how know what are the bounds of either ? Is it not more than probable that physical discomfort on the part of the “ intruder ” is the only reason for the efforts which cause the removal of other birds ? Does either reason or instinct come into play here ? Judging from human analogy, it is possible, certainly, that the movements spoken of are involuntary ; but where the parent birds have gone so far along their particular line of development as to make a constant practice of fostering the rearing of their young on birds of other species, it is more than likely that instinct has its say. As to whether birds reason is too open a question to be discussed ; but who can say they do not ?—H. K.

\* Mr. Graham's note is valuable, as it confirms the experiences of other observers of this bird.—EDS.

POOWONG (QUEENSLAND) NOTES.—The Fairy Martin, or rather a small colony of them, began to rebuild a couple of weeks ago. Cold westerly weather set in for a day or so, and they suspended operations. A change again took place, and ever since they have been busy, and have just completed some of their nests.

The Pallid Cuckoo, incessantly uttering his melancholy note, has also been with us during the same period. It struck me that both these facts are unusual for this time of the year.

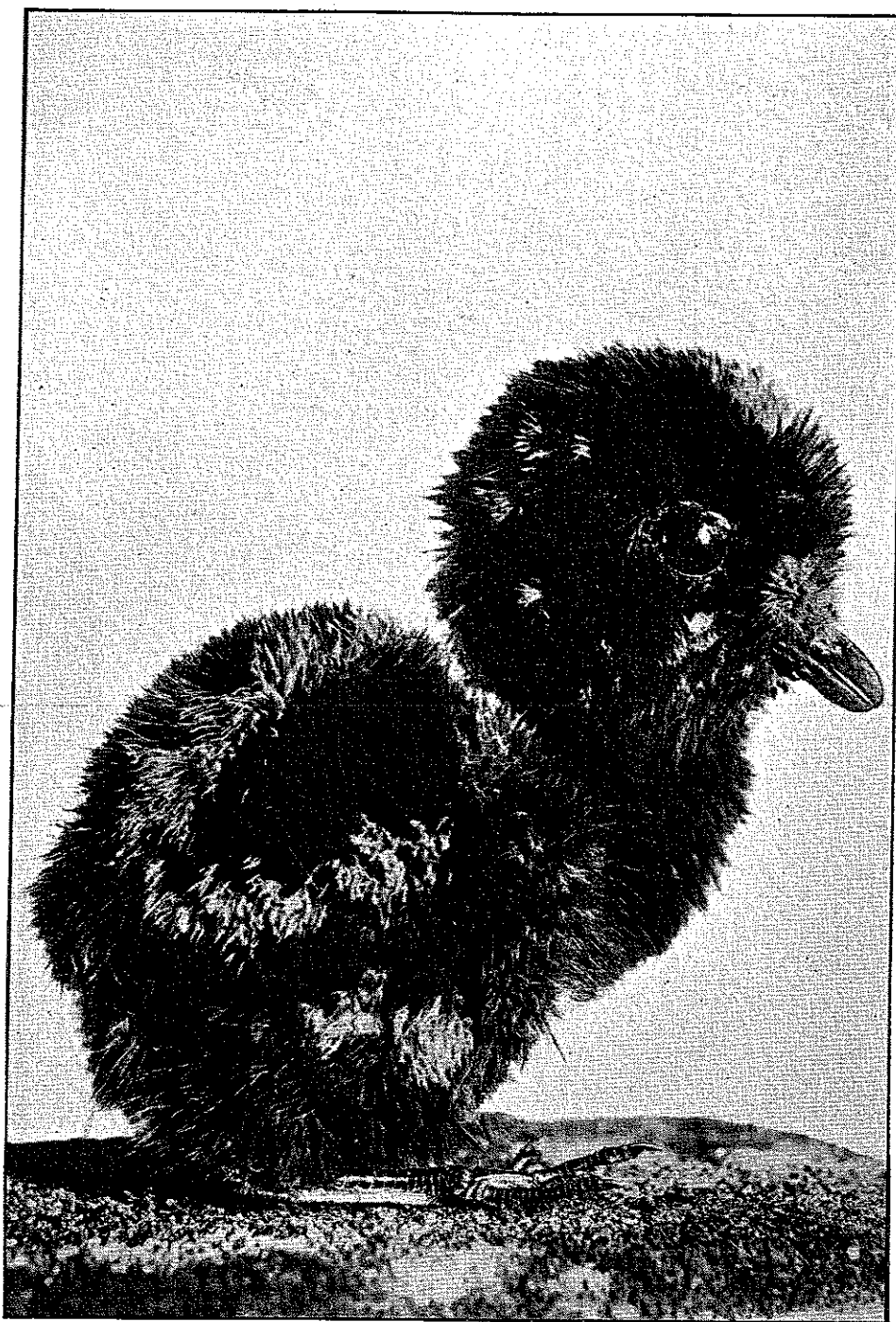
The little "Double-bar" Finch has been more or less in evidence since the big drought, and has just finished breeding with us. I have never known this bird as a resident here before. We are very few miles from the coast.

This year will be the greatest for Quail ever known in Queensland. The numbers of Varied or Painted Quail in timbered paddocks even last year were remarkable, another shooter and self bagging on two occasions 43 and 38 brace. This year they are everywhere, even where the Brown or Swamp bird is usually found.

For a very long time after the big drought the beautiful notes of the Butcher-Bird were nowhere to be heard, but both the common one and the Black-throated are becoming fairly numerous again. The Painted Snipe has this last season been seen in greater numbers than I have ever known.—B.S. 16/5/05.

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ROCKHAMPTON NOTES.—Ornithophils everywhere will be pleased to hear that the devastation of avifauna in Queensland caused by the drought has been followed by a wonderful recovery. In fact, it appears as if there had been a "general resurrection." Around here the coast country is becoming alive with erewhile familiar birds. Laughing Jackasses are again to be seen and heard in the bush; Magpies and Butcher-Birds are numerous, and Magpie-Larks are numerous all over the country, waterholes now being filled. Ibises, which evidently shifted their habitats, have returned to their old haunts. Finches of several kinds are in thousands, their numbers conveying the impression they have been breeding without ceasing ever since the drought broke up. Kestrels came here after the grasshoppers and mice, and Piping Magpies (*Strepera*) are expected to renew their visits this incoming winter. Lesser Golden Plovers, which do not breed here, are numerous, and night hours are vocal with the notes of Stone and Spur-winged Plovers. In our western country the restoration has been even more remarkable. Downs country within view of coach roads and the railway is swarming with Water-Hens—a smaller variety than that common on the coast. They all appeared to be travelling eastward. Galahs, Corellas, Betcherrygahs, and others of the Parrot tribe are in dense flocks, and present a beautiful spectacle as they circle above the waterholes at eventide. Many varieties of Grallatorial birds, Dottrels, and Sandpipers are abundant. A flight of Snipe visited this locality in February.—WILL. M'ILWRAITH. 28/4/05.



Kagu (*Rhinochetus jubatus*) Chick. Natural size, 8 days old.

FROM A PHOTO. BY H. E. FINCKH.

A KAGU CHICK.—In reference to my notes on the Kagu (*Rhinocetus jubatus*) in *The Emu*, vol. iv., page 166, Mr. H. E. Finckh (Sydney) has thoughtfully supplied me with the following interesting remarks respecting the successful hatching of a Kagu chicken, together with a photograph of the same, which is here reproduced. (See Plate IV.) I believe the young of the Kagu has hitherto been undescribed. Mr. Finckh states:—

"On the 25th March, 1905, the birds paired, and on the 7th April an egg was laid. On the seventh day the egg proved fertile, and the birds sat on it for five weeks and one day, the male bird sitting most of the time—I should say four out of the five weeks. On the thirty-second day I observed the egg cracked, which cracks closed entirely as the egg cooled when the bird left it to feed (to keep the chick warm, I should think). I noticed the same for the next three days, the egg at times appearing quite perfect. On the next day (the thirty-sixth) the egg was indented, as if damaged from the outside; then I observed the male bird most carefully peel the egg to about two-thirds without damaging the inside skin, the chick moving freely and chirruping. Towards dusk he forcibly broke the skin, laying the chick partly bare, and then sat on it for the night. The next morning the young one was perfectly out and dry—a lively, fluffy ball, with a big and heavy head. The old ones were very anxious to feed it by taking up as many as six worms in their bills and dangling them round its head. The chick seemed very helpless, so I removed it at times and fed it with worms. The female bird did not much object to my removing the young, but the male always showed fight. The young took the feed readily, and grew stronger, but very seldom opened its eyes, which were very dull. Wet and cold weather then set in, the nest got a little damp, and on the eighth morning, unfortunately, I found the chick dead. The colour of the chick may be described as dark brown with light fawn markings, while the legs and bill are brownish, and the eyes black."—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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TASMANIAN "STRAYS."—Mr. H. C. Thompson, of Launceston, a member of the A.O.U., has the following note in his diary, which bears upon the question of the migration or otherwise of *Petræca phænicea* at the approach of winter, as touched upon by Mr. A. G. Campbell in his paper appearing in *The Emu*, vol. iv., p. 118:—  
"Launceston, Tas., 1904. Several Flame-breasted Robins were observed feeding at a manure-heap in the corporation yard on 21st, 28th, and 29th April, and as late as 15th June; these birds were very tame."

Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*).—Why is it that these birds are seldom seen here until some date in February, and then almost always after a storm of wind and rain? My own theory is that, as they subsist here chiefly upon flying ants, and upon the winged forms of the termite (so-called "white-ant"), they time their arrival to suit the appearance of these insects, which usually

swarm in damp weather towards the end of summer. The following note is from Mr. Thompson's field-book :—"Launceston, 1904. Large number of Spine-tailed Swifts flying low among trees near Trevallyn on 11th February and 17th March. In Frederick-street, on 20th March, some of these birds were seen, at 6.30 p.m., flying low after white-ants." During the present season Mr. Thompson and myself made the following notes :—"W. Devonport, 1905. Spine-tailed Swift seen on afternoon of 21st February, at moderate elevation. Wind S.W., strong; weather fine, after disturbance with rain. This is the first Swift seen this summer." On 24th February about two dozen of these birds were seen, high up, flying singly or in small groups from the westward before a strong wind after another atmospheric disturbance.

"*Malurus gouldi*.—Feb., 1905. Two young males noticed, one on the 11th, the other on the 23rd, undergoing a moult, consequently presenting an extremely ragged appearance. These are usually said to be birds putting off their summer blue for winter grey. I consider that this requires considerably more proof, as I have myself seen, in the Tasmanian bush, males of this species in bright blue plumage during *every winter month*. We consider it probable that the ragged birds are young males hatched very early, and now beginning to assume the spring dress."—H. STUART DOVE. W. Devonport (Tas.), 8/3/05.

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DOMESTIC LYRE-BIRDS.—Mr. S. M'Neilly, Drouin, has been good enough to furnish me with the following particulars of a Lyre-Bird (*Menura*) which he has had domesticated for 20 years :—

The bird was caught in October, 1885 (20 years ago), and had apparently only quitted the nest, his plumage being very scanty. He showed no signs of fear, and was quickly and easily reared. His food for the most part consisted of wood-grubs, beetles, small worms, and an occasional bit of meat. His plumage gradually improved, and after about 6 or 7 years he developed a magnificent tail, which he shed about every year. He appeared to take great pride in his plumage and had a bath regularly, after which he would arrange and clean the feathers. He soon became a great favourite, and had free access to the house, as well as a gully which adjoins the homestead. He would sometimes wander away for the day, but always returned at night, roosting in different places. The men about the place declared the bird a nuisance, and while any work was going on he was always in the way, hence his favourite saying—"Look out, Jack!" There appears to be nothing he could not mimic. The following are a few of his favourite imitations, viz. :—The noise of a horse and dray moving slowly, with the play of the wheels in the axle boxes, chains rattling, &c.; an occasional "Gee up, Bess"; the sound of a violin, piano, cornet, cross-cut saw, &c., &c. All the more frequent noises heard about the farm the bird learnt to perfection,

such as a pig being killed, dog howling, child crying, flock of Parrots, Jackass laughing, and many other imitations of calls of small birds, &c.

At the sight of a stranger the bird was very quiet, and would not continue his antics for some considerable time. He had, however, a great liking for following people like a dog, and on various occasions has been found some distance from home; in one instance he wandered three miles away.

The bird's answer to people saying "Poor Jack" was invariably "Not poor Jack, fat Jack," which the men had taught him to say. Jack succumbed to old age on Tuesday, 18th April last, after a long life of notoriety, and to the great regret of his many "admirers and friends."

Mr. M'Neilly had a second bird, a hen, for about 6 years. She took to roosting in a large gum tree in the middle of the road, some distance from the house. She had many narrow escapes from being shot, which was subsequently her fate. She was at one time rescued from a box, about to be put on board a train, bound for Melbourne.

Lyre-Birds do not appear to thrive unless caught very young. One bird (a hen) which was caught on the nest and kept in a wire-netting enclosure, fretted away and died.—F. P. GODFREY.

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CLARKE ISLAND (BASS STRAIT) NOTES.—The season here, dating from August, 1904, until March, has been remarkably dry and cold, except for a severe heat wave in January, which lasted for a week, with thermometer ranging from 93° to 95°. The birds which usually visit us, such as the Wood-Swallow, Swift, &c., have been conspicuous by their absence, or nearly so. The smaller birds, also, are not nearly as numerous as when the seasons were regular. The Wild Duck is only to be found on the sea-coast at Clarke Island, as the lakelets are nearly all dry, and the water in the remaining ones is too stagnant for their liking. On Flinders Island, at the chain of lagoons at the south-eastern end of the island, Ducks are to be found in great numbers, Swans, and also Wild Geese. Of late years the Wild Goose has appeared to a great extent around the coast of this island, especially on the south-western side at a place locally known as White Mark, this place possessing chains of lakes for miles, abounding with weeds and soft grass round the edges, which seems to take their fancy.

The Brown Quail is with us always, and the Painted variety is also more in evidence than in former years. It is curious to note how, as the Mutton-Bird becomes scarcer, the Little Penguin takes its place. Indeed, in some rookeries, they are, I am told by people who earn a living capturing the first-named, gradually ousting them altogether. The Mutton-Birds are thought to be more numerous this year, but still one cannot build on this until the "season" is over and one notes results. The Brown Hawk, which used to nest here largely, has almost deserted us, although one sees the birds frequently.



The Silver Gull has laid satisfactorily along the coasts, also the Black and Pied Oyster-catchers, building in the same locality year after year. The Brush Bronze-wing Pigeon is to be seen in fair numbers. Last December one could find their nests in nearly every thicket, containing their two white eggs. Owing to the flat formation of the nest, in hasty flight the bird will often kick the eggs on to the ground, and I have seen the young ones in a similar condition. It is very difficult to secure these birds for the aviary, as they are extremely suspicious of traps, &c.

The Wedge-tailed Eagle has also departed to "pastures new," or else terminated their long life, as they have not nested in their old haunt, although the nest is still intact. We have a fair variety of Honey-eaters, the Spinebill and Yellow-throated species being the most conspicuous. Have not seen any eggs of the Spur-winged Plover last season, although the birds have been fairly plentiful. The Cape Barren Goose is flourishing on Passage and Forsyth Islands, their chief homes, and one will often see as many as 50 in one cluster upon the sea-sands when the sportsman has made his unwelcome visit.—J. D. MACLAINE. 7/3/05.

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FIELD NOTES ON CUCKOOS.—So very little is known of the habits of the different Cuckoos that a few facts and some of the theories derived from my experience may not be amiss. Of all birds I think the Cuckoo is the most interesting. I remember once, when playing truant from school, I went into the bush, and on the outskirts of the township (Stawell, Victoria) found a nest of the Scrub-Robin (*Drymacedus brunneopygius*),\* and in it an egg I had not before seen, but experience has since taught me that it belonged to the Pallid Cuckoo (*C. pallidus*). I have repeatedly taken two Cuckoos' eggs in the one nest, but they were always one each of the Bronze species—the Narrow-billed and Thick-billed—though last year my friend Mr. F. P. Godfrey took two of the Thick-billed Bronze-Cuckoos' eggs in the nest of the Yellow-tailed Tit (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*), but then one was partly built into the nest—not an uncommon thing. One day last year I took an egg of the last-named species in a nest of *A. chrysorrhoa*, but the bird had evidently made a mistake, as the egg was fresh and the young had flown, this being indicated by the quill shells inside; and on another occasion, in a nest of *A. chrysorrhoa*, there was only one egg, and that a Cuckoo's, hard set. This bears out a fact I have noticed, that the Cuckoo either eats or destroys an egg or two before depositing her own. For instance, the ordinary clutch of *Acanthiza pusilla* is three, and sometimes four, but whenever I took a clutch containing a Cuckoo's egg there would be one or two only of the foster-bird's eggs. On two occasions I have seen the Cuckoos visit the nest where their young was. Once at Whittlesea (Christmas, 1902) I found

\* Not previously recorded as a foster-parent of the Pallid Cuckoo.—EDS.



a nest of *A. chrysorrhoea* and in it a young Cuckoo, and while there the parent bird came to the nest and fed the young one; meanwhile the foster-parents were in a great state of excitement, and repeatedly dashed at her until she left the vicinity. On the second occasion I was at Ringwood (3rd October, 1904) in company with Messrs. F. P. and R. Godfrey. While having breakfast about sunrise near a dam, we were surprised by the continuous noise made by a pair of *A. pusilla* in a creek a few yards distant, and on walking to the spot disturbed a large bird, the flight at once proclaiming it the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*C. flabelliformis*). In a swamp tea-tree, low down, was a nest, and in it a young Cuckoo with its capacious mouth open, crying for food. It would be interesting to know if they do tend their young, and thus remove some of the hard thoughts we entertain of them, as I have repeatedly seen them about a nest where their egg or young was.

I took a clutch of the Black-and-White Fantail (*Rhipidura tricolor*) and with them an egg of the Pallid Cuckoo, and on the same day (31st October, 1904) Mr. F. R. Godfrey took a clutch of the Rufous-breasted Thickhead (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) with an egg of the same Cuckoo.—FRANK E. HOWE. Albert Park (Vic.), 23/3/05.

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KURRAJONG (Q.) NOTES.—The little Tawny Grass-Bird (*Megalururus galactotes*) is in hundreds here now. The last (3rd March) nest I observed was that of a *Sericornis*, with two eggs, in a bush about 8 feet high. Is it not unusually early for them? I have never noticed them earlier than May before. The Cockatoo-Parrakeets made their appearance yesterday, and to-day I have seen a good many. Little Doves showed up a few days ago, and are now in dozens. Another bird that has drawn my attention is the Bee-eater (*Merops*). I saw three or four a fortnight ago, and since then they have been increasing. I wonder why they come here? Certainly not to breed—it is not suitable country, and besides it's too late. Perhaps they were passing through *en route* for their winter quarters.

We have a good crop of figs just ripening, and three fine old Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) sampled them, and began a feast, so we had to shoot them. I never saw them tackle fruit before. These were handsome fellows and always used to "camp" in the fig-tree in the heat of the day; therefore I think they must have got "tasting." Certainly no more have visited the figs, and there are plenty of the birds always near the house.

Hawks are very much in evidence this year. They are attacking the fowls at all the stations round, and the poor "chooks" are so harassed and worried that they stay under shelter nearly all day.\*

\* Is it not possible that the presence of ticks or some other form of insect life on what Mr. Barnard calls "chooks" would be sufficient to account for the fowls being harassed as described?—EDS.

We shoot one or two Hawks here every week—last week the number rose to three. At some places the fowls are said to have hardly any feathers left on their backs, but I have not heard of any being killed. Goshawks (*A. approximans*) are the chief offenders, but Brown Hawks, Spotted Harriers, and Sparrow-Hawks all join in, and I have even seen the little Kestrels hovering over the fowl-yard. Why they all do it I can't make out, as the bush is "chock-full" of small birds, and grasshoppers are in thousands. I shot one Brown Hawk and found nothing but grasshoppers in his craw. Wood-Swallows (White-browed and Masked varieties) seem to be also following the "hoppers," as they are in countless flocks, but at present seem to have no intention of building. Here is a Wren (*Malurus melanocephalus*) note that may be useful:—On the 25th of February I found a nest just outside the garden containing four eggs. I took them, but the birds stayed about, and on 21st of this month (March) I found a second nest with three eggs. On looking at them the next day, I was astonished to find that they had hatched. Quick work, wasn't it? There were only two birds to be seen at any time, and they were both "browns." Was one an immature male? I think so, because in all the other families that I see about there is always one red and black bird, so I concluded they were not laying out of season. If there had been a red and black male with these I must have seen him, as they were close to the house for over a month and are still here.—ERNEST D. BARNARD. March, 1905.

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"THE SCHOOL IN WILD LIFE."—The publication of Mr. F. M. Littler's article on "The School in Wild Life" (*Emu*, vol. iv., p. 57, 1904) induces me to forward the following notes of my own experience of birds and their songs. They hardly support the theory that the song of a bird is instinctive, and I am led to conclude that birds do learn their song from their parents, and that in many cases their schooling occupies a fairly long time.

The Long-tailed Blue Wren (*Malurus gouldi*), I have found, acquires its notes from its parents by degrees, and is at least nine months old before its song is perfect. A male which I kept in a cage could at the end of 18 months articulate only half a bar.

As to the Laughing Jackass (*Dacelo*): every spring for 20 years past I have observed the parents coaching their young, and noted how the adults would sit on a branch with the learners and encourage them by many prolonged laughter-like notes. Little by little the notes of the young birds changed from "Yah! yah! yah!" to the cackle with variations. Until the full song is acquired the noise of the "school" is very trying to one working in the vicinity.

So with the Magpie (*Gymnorhina*). The various calls and singing notes are learned piece by piece; the alarm note first, then a note of anger, afterwards fragments of song, until the whole song is acquired. In this connection I may record an incident

which occurred within my own experience. A neighbour of mine fostered a young male Magpie, and although Magpies were numerous in the vicinity and this one had full freedom, it could be heard crowing like a "rooster" and singing from the tops of tall trees "Merrily danced the Quaker's wife." Until it was two years old it had none of the native bird song. At that age it joined the wild birds, and soon procured a mate. Occasionally it returned to the house, and sometimes followed the plough when food was to be easily got. In time it became not unusual to hear a strain of "Merrily danced the Quaker's wife" amongst the notes of many wild Magpies scattered over a considerable surrounding area. It seems not unreasonable to infer that the young of the domesticated bird had learned from the parent part of the tune above mentioned and intermixed it with the wild notes of the species.

A Canary in my possession—a splendid songster—lost its song for a long time and picked up the twitterings and chirpings of the Sparrows which infested the place. When another Canary was brought as a mate the first bird regained its full power of song, although it for a long time intermingled with its own proper song the chirpings of Sparrows.

It has been urged that the Cuckoo is an example of a bird which necessarily inherits its notes. However, although its call suffices to bring the sexes together at pairing time it is a very simple matter compared with the varied song of many species of birds. I feel convinced that it is acquired by the young Cuckoo from members of its own species long after leaving its foster-parents, with whom it hardly remains long enough to acquire any of their notes.

Of course the structure of the vocal organs may make it impossible for some species to imitate others. For instance, the guttural-voiced Wattle-Bird (*Acanthochera*) or the Laughing Jackass (*Dacelo*) could never be expected to learn the clear piping notes of the Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus*) or the Magpie (*Gymnorhina*).—GEORGE GRAHAM. Scott's Creek (Vic.), 6/3/05.

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AUTUMN NOTES.—Autumn is the time to look for many interesting notes among the birds. To the naturalist autumn is as full of meaning as the springtime, when even the hardest head finds something to rejoice over in the breaking forth of new life. A certain steady preparation for the coming winter can be detected everywhere. Trees, withdrawing their active sap from the branchlets, allow their leaves to chase each other like brown butterflies along the streets. Birds come, birds go, in search of more suitable winter quarters, and they, like animals, lay by great layers of reserve tissue for the trying season. All this suggests to us in the city the great concentrating movement of Dame Nature in all her forms. She, at this time of the year, lays up her stores for the winter months, and also sufficient energy to meet the first call of the following spring.

The male Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*) is one of the first birds to make the change to a winter garb. Early in March he can be found in the dull brown plumage which his little mates keep the whole year round. At least this is the assumption to which one is led by watching a little family of four in the garden. They are headed one week by a male in blue, the next week by a bird with a blue head and ear coverts, flecks only of blue and black being visible on its otherwise brown mantle, and the third week the leader differs only from the rest of the party in retaining the black of the legs and bill and the blue of the tail. Some folk aver that the plumage is not changed for winter, because birds in blue livery can be procured every month of the year. That is true, but they are the exceptions, not the rule.

Hawks are always in evidence about Melbourne during the months of February, March, and April. They make the autumn their holiday period between one nesting season and the preparations for the next. Several other birds, however, do this. Rosellas and White-eyes (*Zosterops*) come in to prospect for late fruit; Wrens and Robins come about our homes.

We must not forget those who have left us, preferring to spend the winter in some northern part. Careful watch must be kept for the day of departure, else they will slink away silent and unobserved. Both the Reed-Warbler and the Sacred Kingfisher disappeared the first week in April. A large flock of Magpie-Larks (about 50) was seen about the same time flying over, but it is not yet stated that they make a practice of migrating.

About the 1st of April one can generally look for the arrival of the Flame-breasted Robin. This year the long, fine autumn kept it back until the 10th of the month, for it is noticed to appear with or immediately after the cold drizzling weather that turns the season. Where these birds come from is not quite settled. The old idea that they all come from Tasmania is being gradually exploded. Mr. A. R. Reed, of Hobart, in July, 1904, sent me birds in the flesh, with word that they were just as plentiful then as in summer. The records of the species being in the nesting season on the highlands of the Buffalo, Baw Baw,\* and Dandenong Ranges and in Cape Otway† seem to complete the evidence for their summer residence. A significant fact is that the earliest date in my note-book of arrival was 20th March, 1899, at Rutherglen, in the open country just north of Buffalo.

Three times this autumn have I identified the female (or young male) of the Pink-breasted Robin—at Geelong, Somerville, and Toorak. The close likeness of the winter dress to that of *Petroica phoenicea* possibly leads to its being overlooked. The main difference lies in the wing-patch, which is rich brown instead of white.

Honey-eaters are always plentiful when food is procurable. The first gurgling note of the Spiny-cheeked was heard on 10th April. Flowering eucalypts along the river at Burnley attracted, besides

\* *Emu*, vol. iv., part 4, p. 165.

† *Geelong Naturalist*, vol. i., No. 3, p. 50.



that species, a few Wattle-Birds and a mob of eight Warty-faced Honey-eaters. For nearly a week all three species wrangled over the blossoms. The last-mentioned is a rare visitor to these parts.

In the gardens the White-plumed Honey-eater has developed a knowing trick. Large flowers like tecomas and cannas it cannot easily search, so it coolly nips a hole in the side of the bell to devour the nectar. The Spinebill is a constant autumn visitor to the city gardens. Away at Melton, on the timbered sides of a sunken creek, great numbers were seen one day, busily prospecting the late blossoms of the mistletoes, which were there in great quantity. The bird seems fitted to the flower, and comes away dusted about the face with pollen. A little later, when the fruit is ripe, there will be a fine harvest for the Mistletoe-Bird (*Dicaeum*). Already about Melbourne this bird is dropping the slimy seeds of an earlier-fruited mistletoe upon the oaks and elms and fruit trees.

At Rockbank on 15th May, 1905, a walk was taken across the basalt plains, and where the Werribee River is flanked by long lines of box-tree forest, several species of birds were noted which belong properly to the northern portion of Victoria. The Whiteface (*Xerophila*), the Restless Flycatcher, the Brown Tree-creeper, the Fuscous Honey-eater, and the Black-chinned Honey-eater all witnessed to the possibility of forms creeping southward along open and dry areas suitable to their needs.

A Delicate (Lesser Masked) Owl was recorded here a week or two back—a rare bird now. It must have ventured out from the hills. At Riddell (35 miles from Melbourne, to the northward) a pair of Crimson-winged Lories was shot in February. Their presence is unaccounted for. Another bird that seems to have wandered far from its habitat this autumn is the Little Turtle Dove, one of which was seen at Burnley last month and another at Myrniong.\*

Lorikeets are in great numbers wherever eucalypts are flowering, and this season many hundreds of acres on the Mornington Peninsula have blossomed. The trees will get a valuable clearing of scale-insects from these worthy foresters. Though the birds primarily are attracted by the gum blossoms, they have a sweet tooth for the timber-destroying scale-insects in the forests they patrol.

At Burnley last month another little forester put in an appearance—a Spotted Pardalote. It lived a solitary life for some time in a patch of young gum trees planted for shelter in a public garden. It prospected high and low for eggs and young of leaf-destroying insects, which are unfortunately all too common on our native plants. If there were more of these little tree-top feeding birds about, with Tree-creepers and Sittellas to second their efforts by borer-catching upon the bark and branches, I am sure we should not find the gum trees languishing as they do, and leaving their gaunt skeletons near the city, a mute witness to the folly of driving away insectivorous birds.—A. G. CAMPBELL. Melbourne.

\* See "Nature Notes," *Argus*, 5/5/05.