

*Emu.* Judging by appearance, I should say the bird submitted by Mr. Coles has been skinned for several years—perhaps five.

The skin may be thus described:—*Male.*—General colour, bronze or metallic green; on hind-crown an irregular-edged patch of violet or plum colour, and some of the feathers of the mantle centred with peacock blue; wing coverts and secondaries edged with yellow; primaries dark grey edged with dull or yellowish white; tail, greenish above, greyish underneath, and tipped with dull white. Throat grey, and feathers of the breast tipped or hackled with French grey; greenish feathers of the rest of the under surface slightly tipped with yellow; abdominal patch, which runs into the under tail coverts, yellowish white, some of the tail coverts being edged with green. The thighs are feathered, and the first primary of each wing has a terminal notch or spatule as in the third primary of the Alexandra Parrakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*). Feet yellowish; bill bluish-slate, with a lighter (creamy) tip.

Dimensions in inches:—Length, 8.0; wing, 5.0; tail, 2.75; bill, .49; tarsus, .7.

It will be noticed that the male differs from the female by its slightly larger dimensions, purple hind-cap, hackled breast, abdominal patch more defined, and by the notched first primary.

## A Psalm of Dawn.

BY A. G. CAMPBELL.

(Read before the Bird Observers' Club, 24th January, 1906.)

AWAY out at the base of the ranges lay a sleeping camp. It nestled in a thick brake of scrub that clung to the track of a small watercourse, still running. The night was clear and warm, with hardly a breath of air to disturb the foliage or drive off the mosquitoes, which were in hundreds. A Boobook Owl had been heard some distance off; the querulous cry of the Little Nightjar had disturbed the silence; now little was audible save the dull gurgling of the creek as it made its tired way over the stones. A solitary Brush Cuckoo whistled once on the hillside. A few cicadas, as if restless in the warm air, sent forth their strumming din into the night with weird effect.

The picture, indeed, was complete of which some poet has sung—

“ The lone owl's hoot,  
The waterfall's faint drip—or insect stir  
Among the emerald leaves—or infant wind  
Rifling the dewy lips of sleeping flowers—  
Alone disturbs the silence of the night.”

Towards morning the wind and the night voices became still.

It was Christmas Day, and all nature seemed hushed in preparation for its welcome. The night crept quickly on, however, to a sleepless watcher, anxious to note the birds and their order of awakening. Before long the first of the dawn was discerned creeping in behind the stars and brightening up the deep blue background in which they lay. Not until it was much lighter, however, did the first bird call.

The Magpie is early, and the Jackass is earlier, but this Christmas morning it was the little White-shafted Fantail that was first to welcome the coming day. At 3.45 it first whistled, and at intervals of a couple of minutes it continued. The Brush Cuckoo, at 4 o'clock, was next. Five minutes later a party of Jackasses burst out rowdily; they soon awakened other families on the adjacent hillside, and, when their laughing had died down, like a far-away echo could be heard yet another party near the top of the range. Then quickly followed the Blue Wren with its merry twitter, the Yellow Robin with its persistent piping note, and the Magpie with its well-known carols. All these birds called and whistled away some little time before a second chorus was begun, about 4.20, by the White-throated Thickhead, the Shrike-Thrush, and the White-eyes.

By 4.30 the dawn psalm was at the best. The Brush Cuckoo, now joined by the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, gave out their sliding and whirring notes with hardly a breathing space, and several White-eyes by the creek kept up a continuous warbling song. This morning song of the White-eye is different to the single call note, and different also to the quiet Thrush-like song which it sometimes gives forth during the heat of the day. It is the call heard as a party of them is flying overhead. When three or four birds keep at this persistently the effect is beautiful indeed.

Last to salute the morn was a Coachwhip, which was known to have taken up his abode in this part of the creek, out a little from the main fern gully, which is always looked upon as its true home. At first he could not get the hen bird to answer his whip-like call with her two little notes (which she usually does so quickly that it is difficult to say the notes do not all come from one bird), so he tried again in a lower, coaxing tone, but she was still asleep or indifferent. Then he tried again in a high, impatient key, and when this time the answer came he was content, and whistled again in the usual tone.

By sunrise at 4.40 all the bird music had subsided, and the birds were busy with their morning meal.

Yet another morning of observation was spent, to see what could be gathered in corroboration of the first notes.

The White-shafted Fantail was again easily first. There were two pairs of these birds about the camp; the nest of one was discovered in a sapling just alongside our kitchen. The sitting

bird occasionally called from the nest, and one morning while we were watching the nest the mate appeared and changed shifts.

It was 3.40 this morning when the Fantail called (5 minutes earlier than before), and the order of the other birds was somewhat different. The Cuckoos, both Brush and Fan-tailed, seemed to have left the hillside (and the Pallid and Bronze took their place later in the day). The Jackasses began just at 4, and woke up most of their forest mates, for the Magpie, Wren, Yellow Robin, Bronze-wing Pigeon, White-throated Thickhead, and White-eared Honey-eater quickly followed. As before, the high society of the Whip-Birds and White-eyes down in the creek were (at 4.20) the last to make themselves heard. But they added greatly to the effect of the morning chorus; the White-eyes especially, with their continuous song, filled the whole air with music.

A difference was observed in the notes of the Yellow Robin. One call is "Whit whit," whistled sharply. The other is a single piping note repeated measuredly. Now, as the former call was heard in the morning some time before the latter, it suggests that one belongs to the male bird and the other to the female, but this needs corroboration. The same notes of the Yellow Robin are again heard late in the afternoon, signalling the night, though usually between morning and afternoon they are silent.

Above all other things in the bush, how beautiful is the birds' psalm of dawn! Many have written of it in far-away moods, but there has yet to arise a naturalist who will set it to words with a true artist's touch. Meanwhile every morning of the year the psalm goes up in light-hearted thankfulness for another day. Each bird, without stirring from the perch where it has passed the night, sits and pours forth its melody for a space, like a grace before meat. Then, when dawn has chiselled out the features of the landscape, and there is light enough, each sets to upon its daily round.

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## Domestic Wild-Cats *v.* Native Birds.

By A. J. CAMPBELL, COL. MEM. B.O.U.

(*Read at Adelaide (1905) Session of the A.O.U.*)

BRISBANE, Thursday.—In a report to the Gregory North Rabbit Board, the superintendent of works, Mr. F. C. Trotman, stated, in reference to an inspection of portion of the fence, that he was much gratified to find so few traces of *rabbits*. This he attributed to the myriads of wild cats (domesticated breed), which abound all along the line. These were the greatest enemies the *rabbits* had. It was astonishing where the cats came from. He believed they were very numerous on the southern boundary fence, and