

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

if so he hoped they would almost rid the district of *rabbits* in those localities.—*Argus*.

SUBSTITUTE birds for rabbits, and you will agree with me that this is very serious news for bird-lovers.

The cat pest, taken in conjunction with the proper protection of native birds—one of our chief planks—is a question that will sooner or later have to be seriously faced.

What with the recommendations and consideration of "Bird" or "Game Laws," the compilation of an official "Check-List" of Australian birds, &c., our hands are fairly full just now. Nevertheless, some preliminary notice may be taken of the wild-cat pest—*i.e.*, the domestic cat gone wild.

These injurious animals are now practically all over Australia. You find them on the shores prowling about sea-bird rookeries, and in the far interior thriving in rabbit-burrows. They are even to be found numerous upon the islands off the coast. After several generations in the bush-wilds these animals attain an immense size, and become so fierce that they have been known to attack human beings. Now, such great beasts need a quantity of food, and of what does that food chiefly consist? Why, of course, native birds and animals.

How are we to combat this evil? "It is a fine day; let us go out and kill something." That is a Frenchman's view of the chief characteristic of a Britisher. Well, if we must kill something, let us go out and kill cats. I do not mean our hearth-rug pets, but wild domestic cats in the bush. It would be keen sport hunting cats with rifle and dogs—if not too rough on dogs, judging by the size and spitefulness of some of the "Toms" I have encountered. As is done in the case of foxes and wild dogs, let rewards be paid for cat-scalps.

This suggests the ways and means—the only reasonable course being that of a cat-tax. A collection of, say, one shilling per annum from owners of tame domestic cats would yield a sufficient fund to combat and keep in check the wild-cat nuisance in the country, and thus give our beloved birds a chance for existence.

These few hasty thoughts are offered in order to create discussion on a subject which has been uppermost in my mind for some years regarding bird protection. Undoubtedly, if many of our highly interesting and beautiful birds, especially ground-loving species, are to be preserved from total extinction, we must, as a bird-lovers' union, at no distant date face squarely a wild-cat destruction scheme.

[Since the above was read, I find that, according to *The Auk* (January, 1906), an annual meeting of the National Association of Audubon Societies was held at the American Museum of Natural History, in New York City, on the 31st October, 1905. At the afternoon session the principal topic of discussion was cats in relation to bird-protection. At the close of the discussion the following resolution was adopted:—"That, in the interests of humanity and bird-protection, the National Association of Audubon Societies endorses the movement to make the owners of cats responsible for their acts and welfare."—A. J. C.]