

darker. The wings are longer and the tarsus shorter than in *Z. cœrulescens*, and the bird appears rather slighter in contour.

The British Museum Catalogue describes 85 varieties of *Zosterops*, but the only one approaching it is *Z. cinerea*, of Kushai and Ualau Islands. It differs, however, in many respects—notably in the lighter grey upper parts, badly marked eye-ring, brown tail, and yellowish feet. The tarsus, also, is very long.

The following is a detailed description of the new bird:—General colour above, dark ashy-grey on crown, nape, hind-neck, and back; upper tail coverts slightly lighter grey; wing coverts brownish-grey, edged on outer web with lighter grey; primaries grey, edged on outer web with fine margin of dirty-white, and on inner margin with broader band of the same colour; quills very dark brown above, but whitish underneath; forehead slightly darker grey than crown; lores marked with a black streak, which is continued to encircle the lower half of the eye; a ring round the eye of silvery-white feathers, very distinct; ear coverts like the head; cheeks paler than the head; chin and fore-neck ashy-grey, of a lighter colour than the back; breast, abdomen, and under tail coverts of a uniform light grey, somewhat lighter than the neck; sides of the body and flanks light chestnut; thighs like the abdomen and under tail coverts; tail grey, similar to primaries, but not edged on inner web, and edged on outer web with light grey; upper mandible grey; lower mandible light grey; feet slaty-grey; iris brown.

Dimensions in inches:—Total length, 4.5; wing, 2.7; tarsus, .5; tail, 1.8; culmen, .4.

I purpose calling this variety *Zosterops bowia*, or the Grey White-eye.

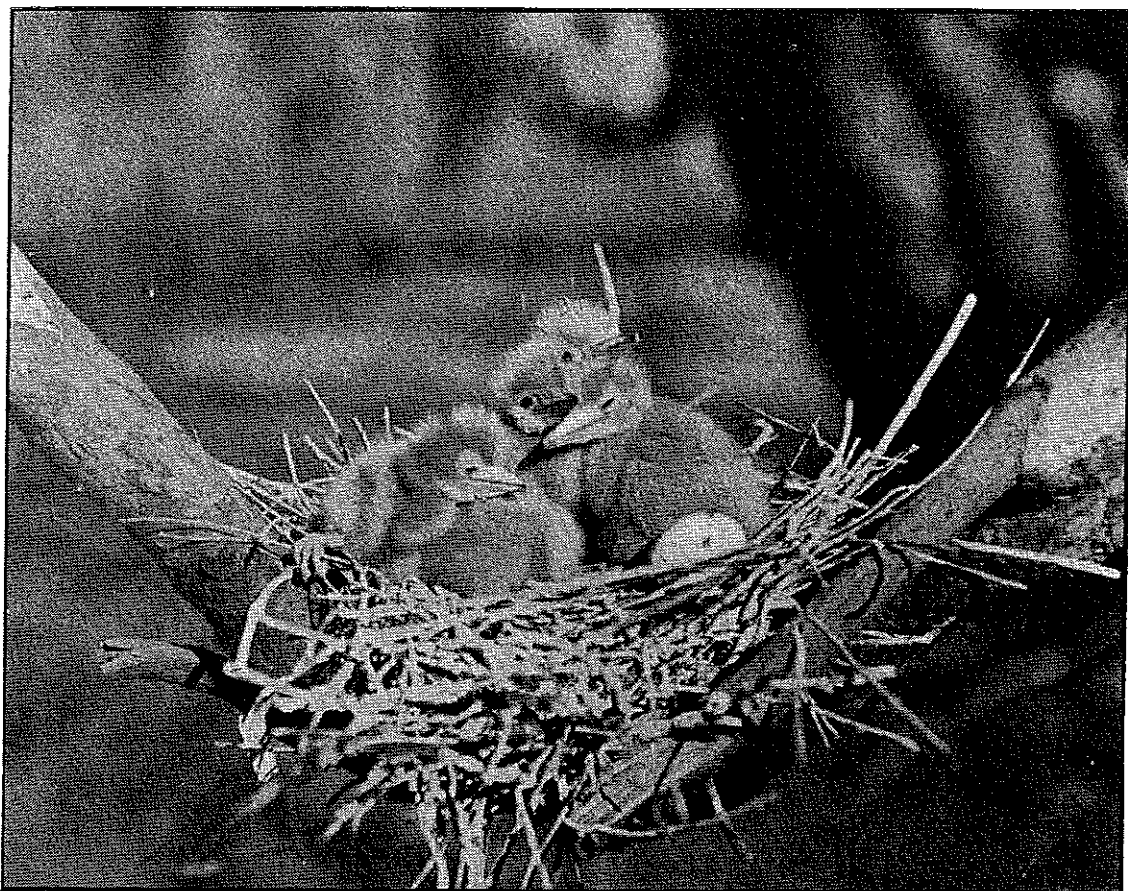
Stray Feathers.

CAPE BARREN GEESE.—My friends in Launceston state that it is not an uncommon sight to see these Geese at different spots down the river (Tamar). During a recent visit I had the pleasure of seeing between 20 and 30 of these fine birds feeding in a stubble field, which was on the fringe of a large reed-bed and morass, near that river.—T. HURST. Caulfield (Vict.), 9/5/07.

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STONE-PLOVER IN TASMANIA.—During a recent (Easter) trip to Tasmania, and whilst taking a drive from Launceston to Rosevear's, I saw fully 30 Stone-Plover feeding contentedly in a stubble paddock. I was not aware that the Stone-Plover was found in Tasmania.—T. HURST. Caulfield (Vict.), 9/5/07.

[The first report of the Stone-Plover having been found in Tasmania is contained in *The Proc. Roy. Soc. Tasmania*, p. xxii.



Nests of White-fronted Heron (*Notophox nova-hollandiae*).

(1) With young and egg just chipped (2) With eggs

(1894-5). A pair was obtained at Spring Bay, April, 1895. On Mr. Hurst's evidence the bird may no longer be considered "accidental" to the island, but indigenous.—EDS.]

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EAGLES.—A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles is generally to be seen on the summit of the Buffalo Mountains. The surveyor, Mr. O. A. L. Whitelaw, informs me that whenever he places a red flag as a trig. mark on a pole at the top of the Horn or the Hump these Eagles tear the flags to pieces, often within two hours of their being erected. Whether the birds object to the flag because it is red I cannot say, but Mr. Whitelaw was going to place a white flag on the pole, hoping it will not share the same fate as the red ones. I saw the claw marks of the birds on the pole when examining the torn remnants.—D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne, April, '07.

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TWO CUCKOOS REARED IN ONE NEST.—In a letter lately received from my friend Mr. F. L. Berney, North Queensland, he makes the following statement:—"I made an interesting discovery a few days ago—a Crow's nest containing a young Crow and two young Scythrops or Channelbill Cuckoos, all appearing strong and healthy, and will be leaving the nest in a few days." The above note is of great interest, and it would be helpful if our other Queensland members would state whether they have noticed the same thing. If so, it would seem as though some Cuckoos' habits vary, the early habits of this particular bird being evidently well worth studying.—D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne.

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THE HABITS OF TREE-RUNNERS.—Concerning the inquiry in connection with the habits of Tree-runners,* I may state that I have observed both the male and female of the Black-capped Tree-runner taking part in incubation. We only have the one species (*Sittella pileata*) in our district, and they are very peculiar in their habits. They generally go in small flocks of eight or ten, and I have never seen more than one nest in connection with one flock. More than one pair (possibly the whole flock) help to build the nest. They often remove their nest when built; I have watched them on different occasions pull the nest to pieces and remove it about 100 yards or more, for reasons best known to themselves. The nest is often finished for two or three weeks before they commence to lay eggs, but this is not always the case. Only the one pair feed the young ones, so far as I have been able to observe.—J. A. HILL. Kewell, Victoria, 7th April, 1907.

* See *Emu*, vol. vi., p. 183.

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 phoenicea*) 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. phoenicea*, 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 *Petræca phœnicea*. 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. leggii*) 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

flourish if introduced and protected from gunners for a few years.*

As to the absence of the Lyre-Bird, it seems to be extremely probable that the Lyre-Bird originally existed here, but was killed out by the tiger-cats and devils, which are still plentiful in the forest gullies, and were without doubt far more so in the old days. In a small island like this a prominent bird such as *Menura* would not stand the chance of a lengthy existence in the presence of so many bloodthirsty foes, and may have been exterminated a good many centuries ago. Probably the aborigines, who were also numerous, would assist in its extinction, as the flesh would be to them a welcome change from kangaroo and shell-fish.

The introduction or re-introduction of the *Menura* would be a most desirable event, but I question if even now the bird could make a stand against its enemies, unless for the first few years it could be protected in large enclosures.—H. STUART DOVE. Launceston, 10th May, 1907.

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BIRD LIFE ON THE BUFFALO MOUNTAINS IN MARCH.—Bird life is not plentiful on the Buffalo Mountains, probably on account of the cold during the winter, they being at an elevation of about 4,500 feet above sea level. A fine pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*) have made the range their home, and are often to be seen circling high above the topmost peaks of the mountain. They have a curious and decided objection to the red flags of surveyors. The rare Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*) was also noticed on one occasion, that being the only other bird of prey seen besides the Eagles. Ravens (*Corone australis*) were in evidence, but were not numerous. Boobook Owls (*Ninox boobook*) were also heard calling at night. A pair of White-backed Magpies (*Gymnorhina leuconota*) had a nest in the belt of timber at the back of our tent. Perhaps the most plentiful of the larger birds was the Grey Crow-Shrike (*Strepera cuneicaudata*). Mr. O. A. L. Whitelaw, the geological surveyor, mentioned an interesting fact to me regarding these birds, as well as of the White-winged Chough (*Corcorax melanorhamphus*). He had set some "figure of four" traps for them and caught one or two, but no more. The others seemed to have seen the fate of their companions, and when the trap was reset they gathered about it and inspected it carefully, then one of the Crow-Shrikes cautiously went up, and, lifting up the string of the noose gingerly, put it on one side and took the bait, of course without getting caught. The Choughs followed its example, so my

* *Halcyon sanctus* is a migratory bird, and does not winter even in Victoria. Attempts have been made to rear young in captivity in Melbourne, but they have perished when the cold weather arrived.—EDS.

friend had to give up setting that particular kind of trap. Grey Shrike-Thrushes (*Collyriocincla harmonica*) were plentiful, and their delightful notes were often heard; they were very fearless. One pair had their usual bark nest in a small hollow at the side of a huge boulder of granite, and where it was perfectly sheltered and well out of reach—a very safe place, as no enemy could get to it. At the foot of the mountain the nest of a Ground-Thrush (*Geocichla lunulata*) was noticed, built of moss, but no birds were seen. Several Flame-breasted Robins (*Petroica phænicea*) were generally on the open ground in front of the tents, and only one Pipit (*Anthus australis*) was noticed. Blue Wrens (*Malurus cyaneus*) were seen on several occasions, as well as the Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*) and Brown Tit (*Acanthiza pusilla*). We saw several pairs of Spotted Ground-Birds (*Cinclosoma punctatum*), and they were also very tame. In the scrub by the creeks, on the way up the mountain, the cheery call of the Pilot-Bird (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*) was heard on several occasions, also that of the Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus destructor*). The White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunulatus*) was seen, and also the White-throated Thickhead (*Pachycephala gutturalis*), Bell Miner (*Manorhina melanophrys*), and Red Wattle-Bird (*Acanthochæra carunculata*) as well as the Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon galeatum*) and Crimson Parrakeet (*Platycercus elegans*). The beautiful clear note of the Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriæ*) was often heard, and on listening to one at his playing mound in the scrub we noticed what a wonderful mocking-bird he was, and how quickly he passed from the note of one bird to that of another, almost running one note into the other. These birds are apparently being slowly but surely killed out by the foxes.—D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne, 25th April, 1907.

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BLACK-CHEEKED FALCON AND PIGEONS.—Yesterday, 19th April, I witnessed a sight that was full of interest and a great object lesson in regard to instinct among birds. A Falcon being observed hovering near the Pigeon-house, my son ran for the gun, and by the time he had got it and a couple of cartridges the bird had risen to a good height, far beyond gun-shot. As it continued to ascend higher and higher by soaring in circles we observed seven of the Pigeons above the Falcon, circling also to attain greater altitudes. This continued for several minutes until both the bird of prey and its frightened sky-mates appeared very little larger than Sparrows. The design of the Falcon was to me apparent all through the proceedings. His object was to reach an altitude above that of his intended victim, so that the necessary downward swoop could be accomplished. The Pigeons obviously were aware of the plot, and were just as anxious to keep above their enemy. When at an immense

height suddenly two Pigeons left the other five and struck out across the sky. Quick as lightning the Falcon followed. The two Pigeons separated, and their enemy's chance had arrived. Singling out the bird on the right, the Falcon quickly lessened the gap between itself and its victim. The poor Pigeon, evidently noting this, headed for some tall pines in a thick plantation, and when over them, though many hundreds of feet above in the clear sky, closed its wings and dropped. Though the Pigeon was a good distance in advance, by the time it came over the pine tops (about 80 feet high) the Falcon with a downward swoop reached to within a yard of it. This ended the scene for us, as both birds were lost to view. Having no doubt the Falcon had caught its intended prey, we hastened to the spot, expecting to see it on the ground feasting. We searched about everywhere, but no trace of either bird could we find. Two hours later, just as the sun was setting, my boy said his Pigeon had returned, and on catching it we found it severely maimed on the right breast, just under the wing. The wound had the appearance of having been caused by contact with some object, and I am of opinion that a pine branch or other obstacle had been struck with terrific force by the poor bird in her last supreme effort to evade her murderous pursuer. It was indeed a grand sight, and that downward swoop of the Falcon's was something never to be forgotten. The noise must have been considerable, though we were too far away to hear. The swoop must have been from 800 or 1,000 feet elevation. I have had many experiences of this Falcon chasing its prey of different kinds, but no previous experience from start to finish could compare with this. I once saw a bird chasing a flock of White Cockatoos, and so frightened were the flock that I fired four shots and killed half a score of them before they realised that I was an enemy also. In this case the Falcon settled on a neighbouring tree, and made off on the first two barrels being discharged. On a second occasion I saw a Falcon attacking a flock of Black Cockatoos. This time I tried to shoot the bird of prey, but it would not allow me to approach near enough. I have also seen these Falcons catch and kill a White-fronted Heron, but this was a very easy task, the Heron being so slow. I do not think this Falcon ever takes a bird from a sitting position, as I have observed in the case of the Cockatoos and Herons that as soon as its intended prey alights it does so also, or else soars around until the frightened birds again take wing. The final act is usually accomplished with a swoop. Falcons, both White-fronted and Black-cheeked, are extremely rare here, and hence opportunities for observing their mode of securing their prey are divided by long years in most instances. I have also frequently witnessed the Brown Hawk and Goshawk, also the fierce little Sparrow-Hawk, catching birds, but though very

interesting and instructive to a bird observer, it is quite a mild affair when compared to the thrilling sight I have endeavoured to describe of a Falcon at the same game.—GEO. SHEPHERD. Somerville, 20/4/07.

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WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE AND LAMBS.—My experience of this magnificent bird dates from 27th of January, 1846, on which date we arrived at Redstone Hill, a small sheep-run close to the present Sunbury. Although very young at the time, it is well remembered that Wedge-tails were exceedingly numerous; hardly a day passed without seeing them. The birds were terribly destructive at lambing time, so much so that if green lambs were not closely watched the number would have been greatly reduced. With all our vigilance lambs were sure to be killed, not when the shepherds were on guard, but when their backs were turned. In 1849 my father obtained strychnine, consequently when lambing began on the Emu Creek next season he played havoc with the Wedge-tails, as may be judged by the fact that I had fourteen dead ones laid out in a row, two of which, to the best of recollection, had fallen to the shot-gun. Doubtless more than specified were poisoned, for Brodie's Forest came to the opposite side of the Emu Creek; besides, there were timbered lands on our side of the stream. The above-mentioned were not searched, hence it is reasonable to assume that more dead birds would have been found. Now, with reference to the slaughter of lambs by Eagles, though my experience embraces six decades, I never saw a lamb actually killed by one of these birds. On this point all that can be said with any degree of certainty is that the Eagle in all cases had driven his strong talons into the brain of the victim. The skull of a lamb at birth, and for some time afterwards, is exceedingly fragile; the muscular development of the bird's legs is very great, while its talons are keen, sharp, and long, and as a natural sequence when pressure was applied the Eagle's claws went into the lamb's brain with ease, leaving marks like pellets of shot. In my experience I never saw a lamb's skull crushed up. Judging from a Wedge-tail which we kept in captivity for some years, the bill, powerful as it seems, is not an offensive weapon. This bird was taken as a fledgling from a nest built in a tall tree beyond Mt. Aitken homestead. We used to keep it secured with a dog-chain affixed to the top of a stump. Frequently the bird got loose, but, as one wing was always clipped, recapture was easy enough with the aid of a cornsack. Throwing this over the escapee he was muffled up tightly, then a firm grip was taken of both legs above his ankles. It would close its beak on my hand. A Musky Lorikeet can nip sharply enough to draw blood, but this Eagle with his formidable bill did not make a scratch.

Putting all things together, my opinion is that our magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagle only uses the bill in tearing off the flesh of the slain animal, for which the crook in the upper mandible is well adapted. Some few years ago three of these fine birds were seen in company pursuing rabbits amongst thistles, when finally, getting one into the open, puss was captured in fine style. The bird tried to fly off with the prize, but the animal, a full-grown one, was far too heavy. On examining this rabbit it was found that it had been killed with a vice-like grip of the bird's talons across the back sufficiently forward to compress heart and lungs. When an Eagle feasts on a young lamb it stands upon the carcass; our pet did the same when rabbits were flung to it. This bird when in that position worked the sharp hook of its bill into the carcass, then with an up-drag tore off the flesh. In devouring a lamb the Eagle broke into its side just behind the shoulder, and directly over the heart, lungs, and liver. Having swallowed these, the rest of the body was picked over. There is very little flesh on a lamb a few days old—in fact, less than is found on a full-grown rabbit—and our tame bird could easily dispose of the latter in a short time. Concerning the weight-carrying powers of a Wedge-tailed Eagle, it was stated one attempted to soar off with a rabbit and failed in that effort. Amongst birds of prey it is generally held that the female is larger than the male, consequently may carry a heavier weight. In my sheep experience never on any occasion have I seen an Eagle try to fly with even a green lamb, and at that stage it is very light. It is true there was no absolute necessity to make that effort, because lambing falls long before these destructive birds commence to nest. It was common enough to see the great creatures circling about—apparently for the fun of the thing—with the cleaned-up skeleton of a lamb in their claws. The aforesaid remains comprised skull, vertebræ, legs, and skin. Wedge-tailed Eagles are not fastidious in their appetites, for they will eat the flesh of animals that die from natural causes, even when their carcasses have become putrid. This, in my opinion, is the reason why strychnine is so fatal to them. My father's mode of squaring accounts with the pest was taking a dead lamb, and, removing heart, lungs, and liver, cut them into tempting morsels, strewed them around, touched each with a dose of the deadly poison. This done, he put strychnine on the remains. One day, with my brother, I went off two hundred yards to await events. Before the lapse of ten minutes an Eagle settled down. Its first proceeding was to bolt the scraps, then, stepping on to the carcass, it began to operate upon it. In a short space of time it became "wobbly," moved a few feet away and fell prone on its breast. The pair of us, running forward, found it beating the ground with partially extended wings, in the last throes of death. During this same

year I witnessed another Eagle's death from strychnine. Three or four were circling leisurely around above a grassy slope, but how high in the air cannot be said, save that they were beyond the range of a shot-gun. All at once one of them, shutting its wings tight, fell head foremost like a stone to the earth, and, hurrying across, I found the Eagle quite dead. Whether its life went out with the first contraction of the wings or whether impact with the ground finished it are points that cannot be decided. Some thirty years ago I had the opportunity of a lifetime in noting an Eagle making a swoop to capture a hare that was hiding in a bunch of tussock grass on our sheep-run. Beyond question, it was a magnificent sight—in fact, no word-painting could give it accurately, for it was one of those things whose sublimity can only be realised by the eye. The bird when first observed might be one thousand paces distant, its altitude in the air two or three hundred yards. He swept forward with great speed—in short, I had never seen a Wedge-tail travelling so swiftly before. There was no flapping of wings. The whole performance was on a very gradually lowering line, whose terminus was a few feet directly above the game. On gaining that point he turned round, but before he accomplished that purpose, puss, springing from her cover, darted for a fence that had a 2-foot wall under its wires. The Eagle at once went in pursuit. The hare evaded him by running close to the wall—a favourite dodge with hares when chased by Wedge-tails. Eagles are now rare birds in the region where I was brought up. This clearance resulted from the free use of strychnine. Before the advent of that deadly poison our only means of coping with them were shot-guns, but if we had depended on them as engines of destruction Eagles would be plentiful now. In my boyhood's days they could be writ down exceedingly numerous. Some of the squatters had used iron dog-traps; one bird was shot minus a foot, which it was supposed to have left in the jaws of a trap. They are hard to kill with loose shot; if sitting with back towards the shooter their wings protect them, while if fired on directly in front it takes strong-going lead to reach vital parts. An overhead flying shot, I have found, is not effective.—ISAAC BATEY. Drouin, Victoria, 15th April, 1907.

Forgotten Feathers.

BY H. KENDALL, MELBOURNE.

NOMENCLATURE OF THE EMU.—Under the title "How the Australian Emu Came by its Vernacular Name," Mr. J. J. Fletcher, M.A., B.Sc., has rendered a great service to the ornithologists of Australia by recalling some "Forgotten Feathers." He has had facilities for examining early records which to many are a sealed book. Beginning with the arrival of Governor