

Correspondence.

THE PROTECTION OF NATIVE GAME.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—May I call your attention to the following letter, taken from a Tasmanian newspaper of the current month, dealing with one of the methods by which our native fauna is being pushed out of existence. :—

To the Editor of the "Launceston Examiner."

SIR,—From all sides we hear that the native game is fast disappearing, in spite of legislation designed to protect it ; and the question is, Can something not be done to put matters upon a better basis? Various reasons have been assigned for this scarcity of game. It has been laid to the charge of over-shooting, the close cutting of stubble, Hawks, domestic cats, and such like ; but I do not think that all these put together will equal the extinction of Quail, Magpies, kangaroo, opossum, and even deer, by the use of poisoned grain. I understand that in some districts near Evandale, when the owner is using poisoned grain to get rid of rabbits, whole coveys of Brown Quail can be found dead, and Magpies by the dozen are to be picked up, having fallen, poisoned, from their perches. He also states that he came across five deer lying dead in one spot, while kangaroo and opossum are lying dead all over the run in question. What is the use of passing laws for the protection of game when a wholesale means of destruction is allowed to prevail, and which is far more destructive than any shooting or trapping can be? In fact, it is sheer waste of animal life, which

could be turned to profitable account in other ways. No inland town has been more injured than the little village of Evandale. The farms surrounding the spot years ago were the scene of busy agricultural industry, second to none in the State ; but the farms became absorbed, and were given over to sheep, the buildings went to decay, and with the departure of the families from the district the very village itself has partaken of the general decay. I remember remarking the state of affairs to one of the owners in question at one time, and, while admitting the fact was as stated, he said :—"The sheep pay best, and the sheep shall have the land." But, coming back to the question of game preserving and poisoned grain. Will not the sportsmen of the North take the matter in hand, and endeavour to do something? I am quite certain that trapping would do much more to reduce the rabbits, and that without any charge to the landlord, if men were permitted to operate and put an end to a practice that is at once wasteful, barbarous, and injurious to other interests in the State at large.—Yours, &c.,

NATIVE GAME.

6th May, 1907.

Another method was commented upon in a recent issue of the same journal, where it was recorded that a beautiful White Heron, a strictly protected bird! had fallen to a gunner of Scamander, on the East Coast. This was done quite openly, the proud hunter publishing his execrable name without fear of consequences. Mr. H. C. Thompson tells me that he recently met a lad coming into town with a small gun on his shoulder on which were strung a pair of *Podargus*, some of our fine Yellow-throated Honey-eaters, and several Noisy Miners. Truly a mixed bag! And the shooter stalked through the middle of the

city with all these murdered "protected" birds in his possession. The imposition of a ten-shilling gun-tax annually would put an immediate stop to a vast deal of this useless slaughter, and the sooner it comes the better for our birds and our farmers also. The State Government is often at its wits' end to make up a revenue, yet here is a method by which a considerable sum could be raised annually without injuring anyone, for a gun is no more necessary here for protection than it is in England, where the ten-shilling tax has obtained so long, and which country is full of delightful wild songsters. With regard to the wholesale poisoning of native fauna, this is, if possible, a still more serious question, and one worthy of all consideration and discussion in the pages of *The Emu*.—Yours, &c.,

H. STUART DOVE.

Launceston, Tasmania, 8th May, 1907.

Bird Observers' Club.

THE quarterly dinner was held in Melbourne on 26th February, 1907, when thirteen members were present. Before commencing the business of the evening Mr. Leach was congratulated by the chairman (Mr. D. Le Souëf) on his taking the degree of Master of Science of the Melbourne University, and also on his appointment to an important position in the Education Department in connection with nature study. It was resolved, on the motion of Mr. A. J. Campbell, seconded by Mr. C. L. Barrett—"That the Premier be written to protesting against the Waranga Basin or any other reserve being opened by a Minister of the Crown for shooting purposes." The exhibits of the evening were plentiful and varied. Mr. G. Shepherd showed nests and eggs of Jardine Caterpillar-eater and Leaden-coloured Flycatcher. Mr. A. G. Campbell showed a fine series of skins of the birds of Mornington district found within a quarter of a mile of the coast; total, 32 species, of which 11 are in Tasmania unaltered, 9 are in Tasmania represented by an insular form, 13 are in north-west Victoria, 21 are in north-east Victoria, 24 are in south-west Victoria, and all in Gippsland and around Melbourne. Mr. A. G. Campbell also exhibited skins of adult and fledgling of *Pelagodroma marina* (White-faced Storm-Petrel); and interesting accounts of their habits and their rookeries were given by Messrs. Campbell and Mattingley, who have recently visited Cygnet (Mud) Island. Mr. Mattingley showed a fine series of pictures of the Pilot-Bird (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*), showing nest and eggs, birds feeding young, and bird at nest. Mr. Mattingley is to be complimented for his patience and success in bird photography, as this is a branch of nature study that appeals to the student and collector alike.

On 25th March, 1907, the ordinary monthly meeting of the Club was held at the residence of Dr. Charles Ryan, the host being voted to the chair. Fourteen members were present, and apologies were received from four others. Mr. Hill's resignation as a member was accepted, as he had left the State. On a ballot being taken, Mr. Isaac Batey, of Drouin, Vic., was unanimously elected a corresponding member of the Club. The subject for the evening's discussion was "Nocturnal Birds of Prey." Many fine specimens of Owls were exhibited by Messrs. Le Souëf, A. G. Campbell, Mattingley, and Ryan. Mr. Le Souëf pointed out the difference of plumage existing in various *Podargi* and other night birds, and holds the belief that