

Meanwhile, the tens of thousands of Gould League Bird Lovers are thankful to the Union for the "Official Check-list." They at least can pursue their desire to study the interesting and varied avifauna of their native or adopted land.—I am, &c.,

J. A. LEACH, D.Sc.,

Organizing Inspector of Nature Study, and Hon. Sec. Gould  
League of Bird Lovers of Victoria.

Education Department, Melbourne,  
22nd December, 1913.

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### Correspondence.

FURTHER ON R.A.O.U. "CHECK-LIST."

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—My attention has been drawn to the following statement by Captain S. A. White in a letter on this subject appearing in the last issue of your journal:—"Mr. Milligan told us at the session [Launceston session] all about the American 'Check-list' falling to pieces through trinomials, or, in his words, '*trinomials were pulling it to pieces with their own weight*,' and that Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, of England, would not use trinomials."

I had determined not to pursue the correspondence on this subject any farther, but as the statement quoted is both fallacious and mischievous, I cannot allow it to pass uncontradicted. In the first place I do not, when speaking or writing, employ confused metaphors of the nature indicated by the italicized words, and, secondly, I had not, at the time of the session, any knowledge of the home working of the American "Check-list," except in the one particular after appearing. In any event, how could the use of trinomials or binomials pull a *Check-list* to pieces!

I think that Captain White is unconsciously attributing to me the language and opinions of the late Dr. Bowdler Sharpe and Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, as the former appear in the R.A.O.U. "Check-list" report which I read at the session. They are as follows:—"I consider that the burden imposed on zoologists who follow this method [trinomials] for the naming of their specimens will become too heavy, and *that the system will fall by its own weight*" (Bowdler Sharpe). "On the whole, I see no useful object in using trinomials; in ninety cases out of a hundred it does not help one to identify a bird—often the contrary" (W. R. Ogilvie-Grant).

Or, probably, Captain White is confusing what I was charged to say in support of that portion of the R.A.O.U. "Check-list" report which stated that a recent practical application of the trinomial system to Australian ornithology resulted in raising the number of species and sub-species from 800 to 1,500. The tenor of my

remarks in that connection was that American ornithologists also were not wholly in agreement in regard to the wholesale multiplication of sub-species, and I cited a very able article appearing in *The Auk*,\* written by Mr. Joseph Grinnell, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, California, who in summarizing at the end of his article declared that the present "Check-list" [American] was unsatisfactory to both the amateur and the specialist in respect to the sub-species problem, and further suggested that a new "Check-list," *with sub-species omitted altogether*, would be hailed with appreciation by the great majority of bird-students.

*The Auk* containing the article under notice was handed to me by the convener of our "Check-list" Committee on the point of my leaving for Tasmania to attend the Launceston session, with instructions to cite it as above, and I carried out my instructions faithfully.

I am at a loss to understand why Captain White introduced this phase of the matter at all, as it had nothing to do with the matters in issue between him and me.—I am, &c.,

Melbourne, 30th Dec., 1913.

ALEXR. WM. MILLIGAN.

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*The Editors of "The Emu."*

SIRS,—In your number for October (*ante*, p. 103) of this year you credit me with saying, in my letter *re* the R.A.O.U. "Check-list," that "I will mix King Island birds with specimens from the mainland." This should be Kangaroo Island. It may have been my fault for most likely I have written "K.I.," which we South Australians have a habit of doing for Kangaroo Island.—I am, &c.,

Fulham (S.A.), 24/10/13.

S. A. WHITE.

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### Stray Feathers.

**Double Clutch of Butcher-Bird's Eggs.**—I lately received a curiosity in the shape of a seven-egg clutch of *Cracticus destructor*. The eggs were taken by a boy attending the Public School at Seaham, N.S.W., the teacher being Mr. S. A. Hanscombe, R.A.O.U., one of the best known writers upon ornithological matters in the Education Department of New South Wales. Mr. Hanscombe states that the clutch is *bona fide*, and that the nest and eggs were photographed *in situ* by him. The eggs are apparently laid by two birds, four of them being much larger and slightly different in shade and markings from the rest. The Butcher-Bird is so pugnacious that the fact of two females laying in one nest is most unusual, and hitherto unnoticed by me.—H. L. WHITE. Belltrees (N.S.W.), 30/11/13.

\* Vol. xxix., pp. 561 to 565 (Oct., 1912).