

Missing Birds.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, C.M.B.O.U. (MELBOURNE).

ON reflecting, one alights sometimes on beautiful or rare birds which are disappearing, or, perchance, have disappeared for ever, like the Labrador Duck, the Great Auk, and the Passenger Pigeon of America. It would be interesting to know if three beautiful Australian Parrots still exist, or have been exterminated. If the birds are extinct, what is the cause or causes of their extinction? Similar birds may follow suit unless remedial measures are taken quickly. Briefly mentioned, the three missing species of Parrots are :—

1. **Scarlet-shouldered Parrot** (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*).—This most elegant species was fairly common in Queensland and adjacent portion of New South Wales. All that remain to-day appear to be a few stuffed specimens in collections. Perhaps Mr. Chas. Barnard, Coomoooolaroo (Queensland), could state when these birds were last observed in his district, where they existed and laid their eggs in ant-hillocks.*

2. **Chestnut-shouldered Grass-Parrot** (*Euphema pulchella*).—The habitat, in certain localities, of this small, beautiful species extended from Victoria up to South Queensland. Some authorities include South Australia. Many years ago I used to notice the Chestnut-shouldered Grass-Parrot on the flats about the Dandenong Range, about 20 miles to the eastward of Melbourne. The bird frequented the thick, scrubby, alluvial flats, and when flushed flew into the nearest tree, where, on a twig, it displayed its perfect little figure. It was also found at Berwick and other places in Gippsland.

3. **Night-Parrot** (*Geopsittacus occidentalis*).—Being a nocturnal species, this Parrot was always scarce, or was rarely seen, although its habitat extended from North-West Victoria to North-West Australia. My friend Mr. Alfred Walker, who resided at Innamincka, Cooper's Creek, for over 25 years, has frequently seen the bird, but he states that of recent years, according to the testimony of both whites and blacks, the bird has entirely disappeared. Captain S. A. White, M.B.O.U., in his recent ornithological explorations through the interior, was specially on the look-out for the Night-Parrot, but failed to find it, while we know that Victorian field observers, during excursions to the north-west corner of their State, which the Night-Parrot used to frequent, also failed to trace it. Evidently this Parrot has been exterminated. Few skins remain of this remarkable species, while there is not an egg in any collection.

The disappearance of the three kinds of birds mentioned is

* Mr. Barnard has replied :—" Re Scarlet-shouldered Parrot. We have not seen a bird since the 1902 drought, and from what I can learn they are very scarce on Fairfield, where we first took their eggs. All being well next September I must try for a run up there to see for myself."

startling, and is, I believe, due primarily to the existence of a fierce breed of wild domestic cats. (I referred to this destroying pest at one of the Union's Adelaide sessions. In North Queensland, where I am at present (November, 1914) staying, I am reliably informed that the tropical scrubs abound with cats gone wild.) Other causes for the disappearance are bush-fires and the reclaiming of forest lands, and, in the case of the two first-mentioned Parrots, trapping in bygone days.

Would it not be well for members to unite to protect or to aid in the protection of some of the fast-failing forms of our avifauna? In point of fact, is not the "protection of native birds" one of the chief planks of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union? I would suggest that a committee be appointed to report on the wild cat question in connection with the destruction of birds. The subject will have to be faced sooner or later.

Notes on Kagus (*Rhinochetus jubatus*).*

By H. E. FINCKH, R.A.O.U. (SYDNEY).

IN April, 1905, I succeeded in hatching, but not rearing, a Kagu chick.† At that time I possessed one pair of birds, which had laid yearly.‡ Late in 1905 I secured another pair of birds, and later still another pair, keeping them separated in pairs in different large enclosures. From this time none of my birds either paired or laid.

Three years ago I was persuaded to part with one pair of birds to a Continental Zoological Gardens. I also deposited a pair at the Sydney Zoological Gardens, keeping one pair for personal observation. During the nesting period last year (1913) this pair had an egg, which appears to show that the birds live in pairs, separately, not in company with others. The female at the Sydney Gardens laid an egg last year. The mating came about in a most singular manner. Having only one pair, I almost expected success, watching my birds closely during the mating season. There was no result, however, until the very close of this period.

A Fan-tailed Pigeon laid an egg on the ground in the Kagus' enclosure. The Kagus gathered leaves, &c., and made a nest about this egg, and sat on it in turns. I permitted them to do so for three days, and then removed the egg, to the greatest disappointment of the male Kagu. Within one week the birds mated, and an egg was laid. Unfortunately, it disappeared; perhaps rats took it.

On the 10th July, 1914, an egg was laid, as on previous occasions about dusk. The nest was then made, both birds sitting well.

* The Kagu is a remarkable bird, placed near the Heron order. It is confined to New Caledonia.

† *Emu*, vol. v., part 1, p. 32.

‡ *Emu*, vol. iv., part 4, pp. 166-168.