

Stray Feathers.

Scarlet-breasted Robins.—A pair of Scarlet-breasted Robins (*Petroica leggitii*) nested near our house last season (1915), and successfully reared their young. The male was still in immature plumage, which indicates that the adult plumage is not fully developed for two years or more.—C. C. CURRIE. Lardner (Vic.)

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Pelicans and Cormorants.—Captain S. A. White states that he is endeavouring to have Pelicans protected for part of the year—from 1st July to 20th December. The South Australian Ornithological Association has taken a lease of the islands in the Coorong where the Pelicans breed, and will have a warden there during the nesting season. Captain White is also studying Cormorants, and, with the great amount of data he has gathered, will soon be able to prove that these are useful birds. He will not rest until the species is protected during the nesting season. He has been instrumental in getting the royalty of 1d. a head for Cormorants removed. He has gathered much information regarding crabs in relation to Pelicans, Cormorants, fishing-nets, and fish.

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Wary Cockatoos.—That the White Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) is aware of the approach of man at a considerable distance, without seeing him, is very evident. I had the opportunity of observing the habits of a pair of the birds that nested here last season, the nest being five feet down in the hollow of a limb 30 feet from the ground. When I approached the nest the bird always flew quietly away when I was about 300 yards distant. Although I walked as silently as possible, against the wind, it made no difference; the bird always flew away. This is only one instance of many of the kind that I have observed. The question arises, Has the Cockatoo some means of detecting danger? I do not know of any other bird that has a similar habit; perhaps some of our Waders have.—J. A. HILL. Golton South, *via* Lubeck (Vic.)

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Highest Nest in Victoria.—On 28th December, 1915, a party, consisting of members of the Melbourne Amateur Walking Club, found a nest of the Australian Pipit (*Anthus australis*), containing three eggs, on the top of Mount Bogong (6,508 feet), the highest mountain in Victoria. The bird was flushed from the nest. The ascent of the mount was made from the Little Snowy Creek, and on that (the north) side the timber ceased at 5,320 feet, as recorded by an aneroid. In the final belt of snow gums was a flock of seven Gang-Gang Cockatoos (*Callocephalon galeatum*), which, I thought, were unusually light in colour, and several Robins (*Petroica phænicea*?). Near one of Homan's cattle huts,

at 2,220 feet, a large Emu (*Dromaius novæ-hollandiæ*) walked sedately past the party, at a distance of 30 to 40 yards. It showed no alarm, and vanished into the timber at the same steady pace—*ohne hast, ohne rast*. Here Whistlers (*Pachycephala*), Thrushes (*Colluricincla harmonica*), and Wonga-Wonga Pigeons (*Leucosarcia picata*) dominated the bird chorus. Lyre-Birds (*Menura victoriæ*) were common in all the gullies.—R. H. CROLL. Camberwell, 25/5/16.

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Moulting of the Crested Penguin.—It is interesting to notice how quickly Crested Penguins (*Catarrhactes chrysocome*) shed their feathers when moulting. A large number was shed on one night by a bird in the Melbourne Zoological Gardens, in November, 1915 (see illustration). During the process the Penguin will not



Moulting Penguin.

FROM A PHOTO, BY D. LE SOUEF, C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U.

on any account enter the water, and, should it be forced in, scrambles out again as rapidly as possible.

The feathers come off in patches, starting usually at the back of the head and near the tail. The bird naturally is busy preening itself meantime, and when its old feathers are all off it is probably fairly hungry by the time it goes to sea. One can imagine what an enormous quantity of feathers must be shed in

a big rookery, like those on the Macquarie Islands, where sometimes over 1,000,000 birds are congregated in one locality for the purpose of moulting.—W. H. D. LE SOUËF. Zoological Gardens, Melbourne, 2/6/16.



Crested Penguin's Moulting Place.

FROM A PHOTO. BY D. LE SOUEF. C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U.

Late Stay of Migrants.—Although the majority of the Pipits (*Anthus australis*) left us, as usual, in April, there is still a small number about the grassy patches by the wayside. As one approaches they rise and fly over the fence into the paddocks, uttering their peculiar sibilant note while on the wing. They are, I believe, young birds of early summer, and appear to be in excellent condition. The few that winter with us seem to pick up a good living. The last Summer-Bird (*Graucalus parvirostris*) which came within my ken was sitting on an electric wire in the town on 11th May, but two or three were reported from the Don (in this district) on 23rd inst. Small parties of this species passed here several times during April, resting for a little while in the gum-trees about my place; all were heading to the westward, and evidently on migration. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) was whistling melodiously from a wooded piece of ground on 29th inst., and this morning I caught sight of it. It used the soft whistling call, not the trill, although two seasons

ago one sat on the wire which runs past the garden and trilled like springtime on the shortest day of the year. For some unexplained reason it is almost invariably this species of which an individual or two elects to winter with us; the more robust-looking Pallid Cuckoo hardly ever stays, and the Bronze never, in my experience.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport (Tas.), 31/5/16.

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Bird Notes from Gallipoll.—24/9/15.—Yesterday I witnessed a sight that gladdened the eyes. High in the air, over the top-most hill as seen from our camp, the Swallows were gathering in hundreds for their great migratory flight. It was most interesting to watch them wheeling and circling in such numbers. I was on my way to a trench near the summit of the hill, and as I mounted the slopes I obtained a grand view of the great army of birds gathering their forces together for the long southern flight. At times, when massed together, they formed a dense, dark cloud for a few minutes; then they would gradually thin out in wide, sweeping circles, and swoop towards the earth, cleaving the air with a swishing sound quite foreign to their usual graceful motion. The idea they gave me was that they were angry and excited. They moved off eventually in a south-eastern direction as far as the eye could follow them. To-day I notice a few of the birds still about. Very little bird-life here. I have seen, so far, three forms—a bird like a Honey-eater, a shy little Robin, and a little bird, observed one day on a flat near the beach, which closely resembles our Field-Wren. From the nature of the country, I should not think it attractive to bird-life.

6/10/15.—One morning I heard a commotion on the hill opposite our camp. Such a clucking and challenging of notes! I could see across the gully to open patches of clayey cliffs, and there were the creatures having a high time, and chasing each other like rabbits. Then I saw they were Partridges. Visions of juicy roasts rose before my eyes, but, alas! friend Turk can sweep the area with his guns.

6/10/15.—I found such a pretty little bird one day—something like our White-eye (*Zosterops*), with a quiet green plumage and soft, dove-coloured under-parts. The throat, when pulsating, shows a beautiful flush of yellow. The song is very sweet. The boys call it the Canary.

5/12/15.—A few migrants have reached us here. Near the beach I noticed a dozen birds of the Stint family. They remained but a few hours; probably the noises of war hastened their departure. In Tasmania, at Lake Sorell, I have shot these birds in November. If these are going Australia way they are late on their journey. More birds are now observed here. Some are very beautiful, but to what family they belong I do not know.—Extracts from letters written by Mr. A. W. Swindells, R.A.O.U., when stationed near Suvla Bay.

Bird Life in the North.—Mr. A. J. Dyer, who is a missionary at the Church of England mission on the Roper River, Northern Territory, in a letter to Mr. G. A. Dyer, R.A.O.U., of North Fitzroy (Vic.), gives interesting notes on bird-life. He writes:—

"Once, I think, I said not many birds were here. But that was in the dry season; in the wet, one sees so many birds which are new to one that one quite loses count of them, and some of them are beautiful birds, too. We have a great variety of the Finch family not described in Dr. Leach's book. You ask *re* Summer-Birds. On 14th December last (1915) I saw a flock of them—I am pretty sure of about 100 birds. They camped on a billabong at the back of the mission station, and since then I have not seen any. Grass-Parrots returned here in hundreds on the 25th March. Grass-seeds are just falling here now. No Rosellas are here, only King Parrots and Rose-breasted Cockatoos. Hawks are returning now, and most of the birds are nesting. They go away into the bush, and we do not see much of them. All the game birds are away now, mostly at the salt water, the natives tell me. We had a visit from a naturalist in a cutter. He called for food, as the natives had stolen his on the King River, on the north coast; he was right out of flour. He had some lovely birds, mostly from the mangroves by the river. He has been in places where no whites have been before. The country there was mostly poor. He started from Thursday Island, sent out by Mr. White, of New South Wales, to get eggs and so forth. M'Lennan is his name. He is a gifted nature student, and has a wonderful collection of bird skins. At present he is at a rookery of Egrets, where there are thousands of birds of various kinds, such as White-fronted Herons, White-necked Herons, and the Great Plumed and Lesser Egrets. To get to them you have to wade out of the boat in about four feet of water, with a revolver in one hand and with a man behind with a rifle, as crocodiles are there in galore, and poke their noses up quite near them. You then let them have one; then your foot goes down on a big catfish, for they are there for the young ones. The nests are so thick that one parent throws out the young ones from other nests. If old enough, they climb up the trees again with legs and beak. The noise is deafening. Fancy three native boys eating 100 eggs for tea, and not at all particular about the young ones! I am afraid that they are not members of the Gould League of Bird Lovers."

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Birds at Cape Otway Lighthouse, 1849 to 1879.—The Cape Otway lighthouse opened about the end of 1848, and my father took charge shortly afterwards. The first birds recorded as striking the light were Black Swans (*Chenopsis atrata*), early in 1849: they came from the south-east, apparently from King Island. The leading bird struck the lantern, breaking the half-inch plate-glass window, and was killed by the concussion. The next bird came

into the lantern room, and was caught. Ever after that a dummy wooden pane was kept to block broken windows, if such accidents occurred. For 30 years, to 1879, Swans were never known to strike the light, although we often saw them in the evenings coming across from the direction of King Island, and going towards Aire River, 7 miles north-west, and returning towards the island. Swans were often heard going over at night, and Cape Otway appeared to be the first land that these birds and Ducks made when coming from the south-east; they always left the land at the same point when going away. They followed the coast-line to and from Aire River.

Other birds that struck and were killed were Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), Australian Teal (*Nettion castaneum*), Grey Teal (*N. gibberifrons*), and White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*). Once nine of the latter species were killed or wounded; they had evidently come across the sea from the south-east, as they were on the balcony and ground on that side. Only one Duck flew away from the balcony at daylight, and went towards King Island, about 50 miles away and not visible. Quail, both Stubble (*Coturnix pectoralis*) and Brown (*Synoicus australis*), as well as Pipits (*Anthus australis*) and Crimson Parrots (*Platycercus pennanti*) and Grass-Parrots (*Euphema elegans*), were often seen, and frequently struck the lantern. We occasionally saw birds of prey, such as the Grey Falcon (*Falco hypoleucos*), Black Falcon (*F. subniger*), Little Falcon (*F. lunulatus*), Brown Hawk (*Hieracidea herigora*), and Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter torquatus*); but it was a rare thing for these birds to come to grief. Many other small land-birds used to strike, but very few sea-birds; probably the light being nearly 300 feet above sea-level saved them. Often, when looking out on a summer's night from the balcony rails, numbers of birds could be seen resting on them—frequently small birds and Hawks near each other. At times the Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*) and Delicate Owl (*Strix delicatula*) were seen, but these probably came after the bats and small birds near the light. In later years very few birds struck the light, and of those that did most were able to fly away.—H. W. FORD. 9 Freeman-street, North Fitzroy.

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Swifts and Weather.—Having for several years recorded observations on Swifts and the weather, I give herewith the result of this year's watching, so far. The first considerable flight of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Chaetura caudacuta*, Lath.) on the North-West Coast of Tasmania this season was noted on the evening of 24th February, from 6.30 o'clock until 7 o'clock, during which time the birds were passing almost continuously—not, of course, in a compact mass, but in a straggling sort of way, a few at the time, as is their wont. I could detect them in the distance, rising from the horizon, as it were, to the westward, and coming gradually overhead, then passing away to east and south-east against a

light breeze, taking insects as they went, as their movements showed. They flew at various heights, from 30 feet up to 300 feet or 400 feet, and must have accounted for a great quantity of insects during their passage. Their appearance was coincident, as usual, with atmospheric disturbance, a thunderstorm, with heavy rain, having occurred on the previous day; and on the afternoon of the day on which they were seen there was a tremendous downpour to the west (the direction from which they came), the papers next morning recording that some of the creeks were up over the bridges in a very short period. On the evening of 5th March, shortly before 6 o'clock, some 30 or 40 Spine-tailed Swifts came from about E.S.E., and proceeded directly and rapidly to N.W., as if migrating; the wind was from N.W., somewhat squally, and snow was lying on the Tiers, having fallen on the previous evening. The birds flew low, just over the tree-tops, the swish of their long wings being plainly audible. Early next morning the wind blew fresh from S.E., bringing a heavy shower.—H. STUART DOVE. West Devonport (Tas.), 8/3/16.

On 20th April about a dozen Spine-tailed Swifts were seen in the forenoon, heading from west to east, near the beach, at heights of perhaps 50 to 100 feet; they were feeding as they went. There had been a heavy shower in the early morning, the weather for the remainder of the day being fine, but very humid. There was a bank of cloud on W. and N.W. horizon when the birds were seen, and the breeze was N.W., light. That same night a thunderstorm came up, with heavy rain, which continued during the remainder of the morning (Good Friday). On the 22nd it was fair until evening, although the wind was bleak; rain set in about 6 p.m. On the 23rd there was a N.W. gale with showers, and very heavy sea running. Many visitors went out to Massey Bluff to see the great sprays against the headland. On the 24th there was a boisterous wind all day from the same quarter, with showers at night. On the 25th heavy rain fell all day, from the south-east, the greatest soaking we have had for some time. So the Swifts once more proved their ability to prognosticate disturbances. This was their last appearance for the season.—H. STUART DOVE, R.A.O.U. West Devonport (Tas.), May, 1916.

Correspondence.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—Will you kindly allow me to correct an item in the review of my last work which appeared in the last issue of *The Emu*. It is in reference to the new birds discovered, which number five, not two, as stated—one new species and four new sub-species. They are as follows:—

Acanthiza marianæ, S. A. White (*S.A. Ornithologist*, vol. ii., No. 2, 1915). Everard Range Tit.