

are most numerous, and, with the Indian Mynah, come around the tents to pick up crumbs from the soldiers' "tables." I have seen a big flock of Starlings, high in air, above a platoon, and the manoeuvres of the birds were so clever as to suggest that they, too, were moving to the commands of a sergeant-major. During the 15 minutes allowed us for "smoke-o" in the morning and afternoon, reclining on the grass, I watch the Starlings and other birds feeding, and the time passes swiftly.

Of native birds, the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina picata*) has been most abundant in the past two months. Day long their shrill cries have resounded all over the camp, and we have seen them patrolling marshy spots or perched on posts or in trees around the park fence. Next to the *Grallina*, in point of numbers, comes the Ground-Lark, or Australian Pipit (*Anthus australis*). Every day I see these restless little birds running through the short grass and onion-weed (now in blossom) searching for insects. Some, I fancy, have already begun nesting. Early in August a Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica leggii*) was observed, flying above the tents in our (A.M.C.) lines, but it was only a casual visitor. Occasionally, just after the bugles have sounded reveille, one hears a Great Brown Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigas*) welcoming the dawn. Recently two Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*) flew over from the direction of the Zoological Gardens, and on a clear, frosty night I heard the honking of a flock of Black Swans that was flying westward above the sleeping camp. Other birds were winging "across the moon"; I heard their calls, faintly, but could not identify the species.

The gum trees on the outskirts of the Park are frequented by Honey-eaters, Acanthizas, and other small birds, and if one had leisure in the day-time a fairly good list of species could be made. Several of my camp-mates are interested in birds, and one is a member of the Gould League, having joined it when at school.—(PRIVATE) CHARLES BARRETT, C.M.Z.S., R.A.O.U. Royal Park Camp, Vic., 5/9/16.

Bird Observers' Club.

THE Acanthizæ were the subject for special attention at the June meeting of the B.O.C. Mr. F. E. Howe read a paper on the genus. He showed the close relationship of some of the species and sub-species, and compared the methods of Australian ornithologists in classifying them. A chart showed at a glance how each worker had split up the species. Mr. Howe traced several dominating species through their geographical variations. Mr. A. Chas. Stone exhibited a series of eggs of the genus, and drew attention to *Acanthiza ewingii rufifrons*, from King Island, which had the characteristic of laying one white and two spotted eggs to a clutch.

The secretary, Mr. F. E. Wilson, showed a series of skins of the genus, including Victorian and Western Australian forms of *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*.

Mr. A. E. V. Richardson, M.A., B.Sc., Superintendent of Agriculture, was elected a provisional member of the club.

The July meeting received some interesting information about the Lyre-Bird.

Mr. L. C. Cook, of Poowong, read a paper on the birds and their habits. He showed that the human element in the nesting habits of birds was sometimes beneficial. He destroyed nests of the Lyre-Birds that were placed near the ground on his reserve, for the purpose of inducing them to build higher, and so escape the ravages of the fox. The fact that in place of four birds there are now eleven shows what measure of success he has met. A neighbouring place where the birds were left unmolested showed practically no increase.

Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S., exhibited some unique lantern slides of the birds and their haunts, while the president, Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, C.M.Z.S., showed slides illustrating other bird life in the same haunts.

The eggs of *Menura victoriae* and *M. superba* were exhibited by Mr. A. Chas. Stone, who remarked upon the variation in colouring of the eggs of this family.

Lieut.-Col. Bryant entertained the members at his rooms at the August meeting. He gave a most interesting and instructive paper on "Birds Met With While on Foreign Service with the A.I.F." He illustrated his remarks with lantern slides, which included some remarkable views of the war zone. The swamps bordering the Nile held vast numbers of aquatic birds, the rarest of which was the Fan-tailed Sandpiper. Numerous species of birds were seen around Cairo, and hundreds of Kites frequented the city. These birds acted as excellent scavengers, and did incalculable good for the health of the community. White Egrets were seen breeding in the Zoological Gardens at Cairo. Lemnos Island was not rich in bird life. About a dozen different species were noted, including the Mediterranean Gull, which followed the old-fashioned ploughs of the peasants in search of food.

Mr. Le Souëf read an extract from the *Bulletin* of the Zoological Society of New York dealing with the plume trade in India. It showed that £44,000 worth of Egret plumes had been seized by the Customs, and fines to the amount of 55,000 rupees had been paid.

Mr. Harold Pottenger was elected a member of the club.

The quarterly dinner and usual meeting was held on 21st September, 1916.

The chairman, Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, suggested to the members the desirability of using the bird movement to augment the patriotic funds. Discussion ensued, and it was decided to go further into the matter. Members were asked to offer suggestions for a motto for the club at the next meeting.

Several members gave some interesting field notes for this season (1916), which went to prove that the birds had started breeding early. Some remarkable observations on game-birds were related by Dr. Norman M'Arthur. The method adopted by the Little Falcon (*Falco lunulatus*) in killing its prey was to seek the upper position and strike obliquely. The Black Duck, its favourite quarry, often rose forward quickly, and the Falcon swept past its tail; but the rapidity of its flight soon brought it to the upper position again. When the Falcon was successful it accomplished the feat of completely scalping its quarry with its claw.