

## Notes upon Eggs of the Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaëtus audax*).

BY. H L. WHITE, R.A.O.U., BELLTREES, N.S.W.

THE six sets of [*Uroaëtus audax* eggs which I send for exhibition at this monthly meeting of the R.A.O.U. are not typical—in fact, they are abnormal in coloration.

It is extremely hard to decide upon the typical colour of *Uroaëtus* eggs. During the last two seasons I have examined upwards of 50 sets, every one of which differed from what I had decided as a typical pair in my collection. The more one sees of eggs of this species the more the fact is made clear that to establish a type is almost impossible.

My collection contains 30 clutches; that of my friend Mr. J. H. Bettington, of "Terragong," Merriwa, has a still greater number. This gentleman has the largest collection of Wedge-tailed Eagle's eggs in Australia.

Some thirty years ago the Eagles existed here in hundreds, but are now rare; on the other hand, at "Terragong," 45 miles due west, the birds are still very numerous, and Mr. Bettington might easily collect 30 clutches of eggs during the spring.

In my collection are specimens from each State of the Commonwealth, all showing considerable variation, but none exhibiting the extreme difference found in those collected by Mr. Bettington on a comparatively small area round his estate. Not only do the "Terragong" eggs show great variation in size and shape, but the coloration is most unusual. Some specimens are almost spherical, while others are rather long ovals. The shades of colour range from pure white and bluish-white to dark rusty-red, through many shades of lilac, brownish-red, and purple.

The Merriwa country is chiefly undulating, black soil, volcanic formation, very rich, and well watered. I am puzzled as to whether some particular chemical in food or soil has anything to do with the bright coloration of the eggs generally. Some clutches of Ravens' (*Corone australis*) eggs obtained in the locality show a bright deep greenish-blue colour, quite unlike anything I have seen elsewhere. As the Merriwa country has been ringbarked for many years, Eagles find a difficulty in securing proper material for nest construction. During late years some have utilized the dead stalks (frequently with roots attached) of the variegated thistle (*Carduus lanceolatus*), which grows most profusely in the locality. These thistle-stalks become very limp in damp weather, and the nests do not last long. In one particular instance the stalks were so unstable that they kept slipping from their position, and eventually formed a heap, equal to a dray-load, on the ground underneath. The birds exhibited remarkable patience, and at last, with the aid of *Angophora* twigs, completed the nest.

Of the eggs sent, the pure white clutch marked "A" is a gift from Mr. Bettington to the R.A.O.U. collection. Had this set been taken near the coast a suspicion might have arisen as to its

belonging to *Haliaeetus leucogaster*; but Mr. Bettington personally verified the find, and states the female bird to be one of the darkest he has seen; the nest was robbed three times, the clutch upon each occasion being white.

Clutch "B" represents abnormally large eggs—(1) 3 inches 1 line by 2 inches  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lines, (2) 3 inches 1 line by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches—the cubic contents being greater than any other I have seen recorded. The coloration is peculiar also, if not characteristic.

Clutches "C" and "D," each containing a dark egg and a light one, were taken (together with a third set) during the present season from the same nest, and apparently laid by the same bird. These are extremely interesting and most puzzling. The fact of the bird laying three clutches all showing the combination of dark and light eggs shows there must be some cause for the variation. Unfortunately, it was not noted which egg was laid first. I had previously noted this variation in a clutch from Tasmania. It is the exception to find a well-matched pair of Eagle's eggs, but, on the other hand, nearly all the clutches of three I have examined were very well matched in size, shape, and coloration.

Clutch "E"—small, round eggs, a well-matched pair, with light lavender underlying markings. I thought at first that heavy incubation might account for the pale colour, but Mr. Bettington has a similarly coloured pair, taken fresh, from the same nest.

Clutch "F" represents a new phase in markings (bluish-white ground—one specimen fairly marked, other almost free from markings). I have seen nothing similar previously.

I could exhibit many more variations, but as there is some risk in sending eggs so far, I thought this exhibit would give some slight idea of the variations in eggs of *Uroaetus audax*.

## Two Singing Species of *Gerygone*.

By A. H. CHISHOLM, R.A.O.U., BRISBANE.

*Gerygone* is undoubtedly one of the most engaging genera of Australian birds. The remarkable activity of the little creatures, their highly-insectivorous qualities, and, in particular cases, their sweet songs, all combine to make them both valuable and lovable.

The question of the origin of this generic name has interested me of late, and, being unable to determine it from ornithological sources, I invited the opinion of a member of the staff of the Queensland University. From this scholar came the suggestion that the title is a compound of the Greek words *gerus*, "a voice," and *goné*, "the offspring of." Theocritus, in a poem called "Syrinx" (280 A.D.), speaks of "maidens *gerugonai*"—i.e., "born of sound." Gould first called the genus *Psilopus*, but later found this to be pre-occupied.\* Is it, then—lacking other suggestion or explanation—too much to assume that, when

\* "Handbook," vol. i., p. 265.