



$\frac{1}{2}$

THE NARETHA PARROT
(*Psephotus narethae*) H. L. White

Male—lower figure

Female—upper figure

The Emu

Official Organ of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union

"Birds of a feather."

VOL. XXI.]

1st OCTOBER, 1921.

[PART 2.]

The Naretha Parrot (*Psephotus narethae*) sp. nov.

By H. L. WHITE, C.F.A.O.U., M.B.O.U., "Belltrees," Scone,
N.S.W.

Adult Male.—General colour above, including the greater portion of head, the fore-neck and chest pale brown becoming more greyish-olive* in tone on the back; the rump and upper tail coverts a rich olive yellow (Pyrite yellow); the nape, hind-neck, throat and upper breast mottled with a light buff (Tillcul buff); forehead and lores verditer green; cheeks a rich purplish blue (Violet ultramarine) with an edging of light cream; abdomen (Citron yellow), flanks washed with greyish olive; under tail coverts vermillion; lesser wing coverts cerulean blue outer median wing coverts scarlet vermillion; inner median and greater wing coverts olive yellow (Pyrite yellow); the inner secondaries olive yellow, the inner webs being blackish brown; the outer secondaries, primary coverts a rich blue (Ultramarine); primaries, except the first, which is blackish brown, a rich blue (Ultramarine) extending from their base half way down their outer webs, the other half of their outer webs a pale mauve; the inner webs black; central pair of tail feathers dull olive green, the apical half of their outer webs and tips dull blue; the remainder dull blue at the base, white on their apical portion; all but the lateral feathers with a pale bluish wash on their outer webs extending nearly to their tips. Bill whitish horn colour, bluish at the base; legs and feet dark fleshy grey; iris dark brown. Total length, 285 mm.; wing, 122 mm.; culmen, 19 mm.; tarsus, 19 mm.; tail, 172 mm.

*Colors in brackets are taken from Ridgway's "Color Standard of Color Nomenclature."

Adult Female.—Very similar in plumage to the male, but smaller; with less colour on the wings, cheeks, abdomen and tail. Total length, 260 mm.; wing, 113 mm.; culmen, 18 mm.; tarsus, 20 mm.; tail, 153 mm.

Immature Male.—The immature male upon leaving the nest carries plumage very similar to that of the mature female; but with a marked wash of bright yellow over the feathers of body and wings.

The finding of a new parrot is such a notable event in the ornithological world, that a few remarks upon the discovery of *Psephotus narethae* may not be out of place.

Captain S. A. White, having worked up the birds on the eastern edge of the great Nullarbor Plain, it was suggested to me that similar useful data should be obtained on the Western Australian side, some 450 miles distant; the intervening country, about the size of the State of Victoria, being level, treeless and waterless.

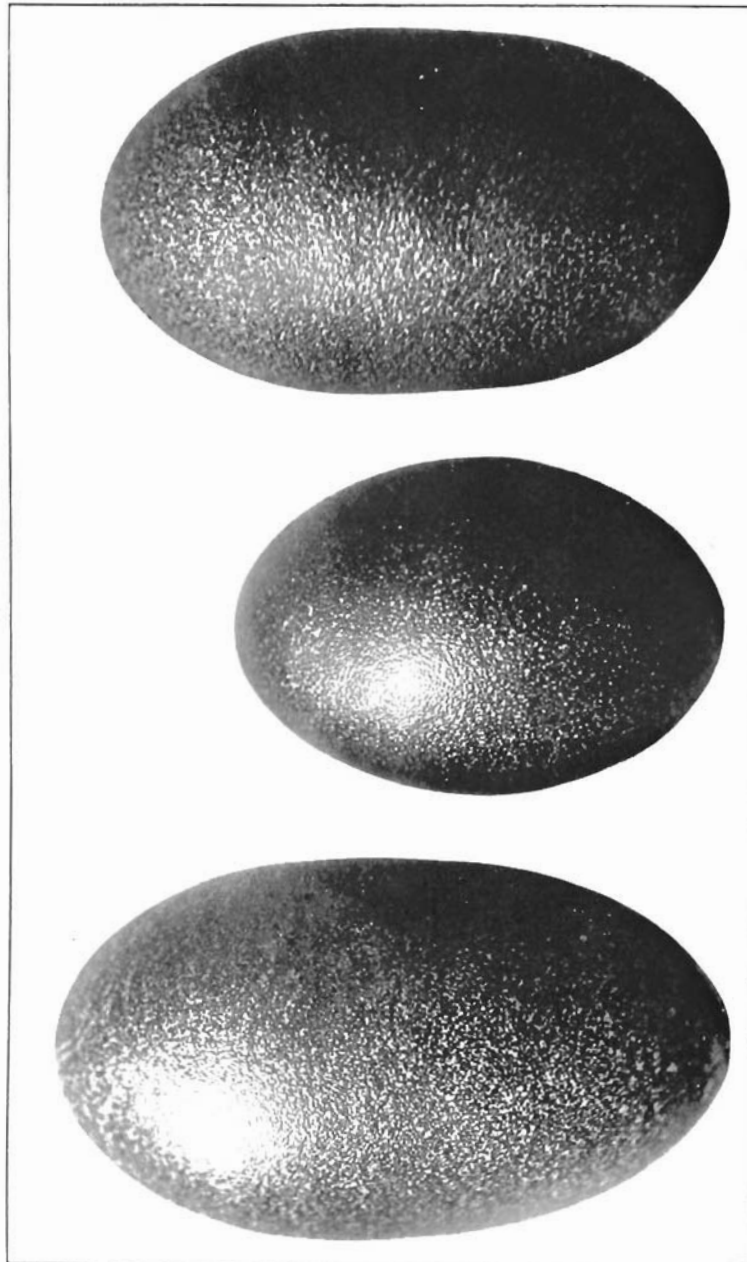
Having secured the services of Mr. F. L. Whitlock, who had previously done such wonderfully good work for me, I suggested Zanthus, on the trans-Australian railway line, 130 miles east of Kalgoorlie, as a starting point.

Certain concessions having been kindly granted by the Commonwealth Railway Department, Mr. Whitlock fixed his camp at Zanthus during July, but soon found he was too far to the west; and an important matter coming under his notice, hastened his departure. A railway official had in captivity a parrot, said to have been taken at Naretha, 75 miles further east, near the edge of the great plain, the bird agreeing with no published description.

Business calling me to Perth, I passed Zanthus on the 1st August last, and met Mr. Whitlock there for a quarter-of-an-hour's talk. Upon hearing of the pet parrot, I said: "Get away to Naretha without delay, and report to me there on my return journey." On the 8th, Mr. Whitlock met the train at Naretha, and handed me three (3) skins, saying he thought the bird was new.

Upon arrival at Adelaide, I had a few minutes' conversation with Captain White, who gave an opinion that the parrot was a good species. A careful comparison at the National Museum, Melbourne, settled the matter conclusively.

The discovery of this bird points to the possibility of the Nullarbor plain separating certain eastern and western forms, in a manner similar to that noted in North-West Australia, where a wide stretch of desert country extending south from Broome appears to act as a barrier to certain forms of bird life.



Very large eggs of the Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*). The centre egg is the usual size.

DESCRIPTION OF EGGS OF NARETHA PARROT
(*Psephotus narethae*).

Eight nesting holes were observed, all in Desert Oaks (*Casuarina*). The type clutch was taken from a hole 5 feet from the ground, and at a depth of 18 inches from the entrance.

Clutch, five; rounded oval in shape; shell close in grain, but slightly rough; colour, dead white without gloss.

Measurements in inches—A, .9 x .74; B, .88 x .72; C, .9 x .71; D, .93 x .73; E, .89 x .73.

Another clutch of four is uneven in size, the average being .86 x .7 in.

Both taken by F. L. Whitlock at Naretha, W.A., the first-named clutch on August 31st, and the second on September 6th. The bird appears to be an early breeder, six nests observed by Mr. Whitlock during August containing from four to six young each.—HENRY L. WHITE.

Abnormal Eggs of the Emu.—Copy of data supplied by Mr. C. J. Craig, of the Department of Agriculture, Perth, W.A.:—

"These two large eggs of *Dromaius nova-hollandia* were found in desert country some 200 miles south of the North-West coast. Condouve Shellborough is marked on the map. Go east on the coast line 40 miles, thence south 200 miles, and you have the locality. Eight eggs, all abnormal, were in the nest. Unfortunately, natives had roasted six (one exceptionally large, judging by the half shell) before my arrival." I went to a good deal of trouble to test the authenticity of these eggs.

Specimen A measures 173 x 99 mm; specimen B measures 167 x 95 mm. An ordinary-sized egg measures about 130 x 85 mm. A peculiarity about the eggs is their long oval shape.

—H. L. WHITE. 5/9/21.

* * *

The New British Law which has for its object the protection of bird life is not the same law as that which was on the eve of enactment when war came, Dr. William T. Hornaday, Campaigning Trustee of the Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund, said yesterday, and he termed it a half victory for the London plumage trade. He predicted that the three representatives of the feather trade on the committee to be appointed would be "hand picked," and would dominate the committee.—From *The New York Times*.