

## Correspondence

*To the Editors of "The Emu."*

Sirs,—I have read with interest Mr. Edwin Ashby's paper on "Private Collections and Permits," and without criticism of the paper itself, I wish to make certain comments in relation to private collecting and bird-protection.

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In the interior of our continent there is undoubtedly still a limited amount of research work to be done in Ornithology, but how many "promising *bona fide* workers" will be in a position to visit these places to collect specimens. The majority of ornithologists have their homes in the cities.

In museums and in private collections already in existence, there is, for reference purposes and study, a vast quantity of skins and eggs. The issue of further permits to young students would be a menace to our rarer birds, and, in public opinion, a set-back to the cause of bird-protection. Most of the work of these men would be confined to an area within a "week-end" radius of the city in which they lived, and like collectors of the present day, in an effort to enlarge their collections, they would concentrate their attention on rare birds and their eggs. In such cases when the collection reaches a certain number of species, it is possible to add rare species from other States only by an exchange of rare species.

A permit is supposed to restrict the holder to a limited number of bird skins or sets of eggs, but with the majority of collectors the limit is reached only when the last set of rare eggs that is found for the season, is—to use a favourite collecting phrase—"lifted." The public are becoming aware of this, and it doesn't forward the cause of genuine bird protection.

There is plenty of research work for the student without his becoming a general collector. In Economic Ornithology alone there is a large field for study, but that need embrace only common species whose usefulness to the farmer is in doubt. There is no occasion to shoot, say, a Lyre-Bird or a Helmeted Honeyeater to discover what food they eat. I contend that the methods adopted by the old school of ornithologists, where a bird had to be shot to be studied, have, in so far as the settled portions of Australia are concerned, outlived their utility. The main objective of Ornithological Clubs for the future should be the preservation of bird-life. The education of the public, particularly the agricultural community, by propaganda and illustrated lectures, should be a strong plank of the R.A.O.U.

As Mr. Ashby points out, sanctuaries must be an important factor in the preservation of wild birds, but a sanctuary without a warden is almost useless. The enthusiastic "egg-lifter" does not stop short of a sanctuary if he requires a set of eggs. The public, knowing this, look on with suspicion when sanctuaries are mentioned. If the R.A.O.U. discourages the formation of further private collections except in special restricted cases, it will soon have the weight of public opinion behind it in its efforts to protect birds.

In conclusion, Sirs, in reference to the resolutions which were passed at the Adelaide session, I wish to protest against the

power that is held by the fortunate few who attend the Annual Congress. Anything affecting the policy of the R.A.O.U. should be decided by a postal vote of all members.—Yours, etc.,

L. G. CHANDLER.

Redcliffs, 28/1/22.

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*To the Editors of "The Emu."*

Sirs,—At the Congress in Adelaide, Mr. Ashby read a paper, which was printed in the January issue. Personally I am against the formation of further collections, especially with material from the vicinity of large cities and towns, and I hasten to disassociate myself from the policy outlined in Mr. Ashby's motion. I hope that many other members will voice their opinions in the *Emu*, else the views expressed by Mr. Ashby are likely to be accepted as the views of the Union generally. But neither Mr. Ashby's personal opinion, nor mine, nor even of those fortunate enough to be able to attend the Congress, should direct the policy of the Union on such an important matter.

I would suggest, then, that a vote of the whole of the members on the question be taken at the next Congress along with the election of office-bearers.—Yours, etc.,

R. T. LITTLEJOHNS.

Melbourne, 19/12/22.

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**Collecting and Killing Birds.**—When the R.A.O.U. was formed, one of the chief planks in its platform was stated to be "the protection of our native birds." If we are going to protect them, let us do it wholeheartedly, and not allow their ranks to be thinned year after year by an army of egg and skin collectors. I have it on good authority that from 30 to 40 clutches of *Acanthornis magna* eggs are taken every season in the south of our island, for exchange with mainland and foreign collectors. As this interesting little species is found only in our limited Tasmanian bush, why should it be exterminated—lost to the world—to satisfy the rapacity of a small section of the community?

Another point which should receive attention from protectionist members is the closing for the whole year of Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*) shooting. The Launceston *Examiner* of 28th February, recorded the massacre of 303 birds at Swansea by a sporting party. This wholesale slaughter of a characteristic Australian species—the original "*rara avis in terris*"—is nothing less than a disgrace to a civilised community.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., R.A.O.U., W. Devonport, Tasmania.