

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Committee on the able way in which they have carried out this work, to thank them for the prodigious labour involved in the undertaking, and to express hearty appreciation of the result. If, as probably will be the case, the present Official Checklist serves more than one generation of Australian ornithologists without requiring substantial revision, then their labours will have received a fitting reward and their thoroughness a fuller recognition.

Some Critical Remarks on Prions (*Pachyptila*).

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FOR the *Australian Bird Biographies* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney), and to aid the Checklist of the R.A.O.U., we endeavoured to find a key to the species of the intricate family of Prions.

With the assistance of the inter-state Museum collections (including that of Mr. H. L. White) kindly placed at our disposal, all available material (about 100 specimens) has been carefully examined. The result appears to be three definite groups with the following average measurements in millimetres :—

Name.	Width of Bill.	Length of Bill.	Per cent. of Width to Length.	Wing.
<i>P. desolata</i>	10.7	23	46	176
<i>P. banksi</i>	14.5	27.7	52	189
<i>P. vittata</i>	20.8	34.7	60	205

The width of bill is stated by Godman* to show a connection practically complete between one species and another; while Buller† says "a regular sequence can be formed from *P. vittatus* to *P. ariel*."

A tally of all the Australasian material indicates that in respect to width of bill there are two main foci, namely, from 10 to 11 mm. and from 13 to 15 mm. More than half the specimens are therefore within a millimetre of the average for the species, and variation above or below is comparatively uncommon—certainly not in "regular sequence." Further, the individual variations cannot be said to link one species with another, because, even if omitted from the table, they do not materially affect the averages.

If we admit that species in nature are produced by variations, then we must expect some such variations from the normal average.

*" Monograph of the Petrels," p. 285.

†Buller: " Birds of New Zealand," p. 201.

G. M. Mathews, who gives an exhaustive history of the Prions in *Birds of Australia*, Vol. II, sets down an ingenious theory (p. 220) that each species, or sub-species, has been developed in its own particular island. That Prions do occasionally keep together in clans is illustrated by the fact that in June, 1926, twelve specimens* were obtained on Cottlesloe Beach, W.A., thrown up dead after a storm. The width of bill is from 15 to 18 mm., average 16 mm. After another storm in October following, dead birds were again found at Cottlesloe and some at Bunbury. Twelve specimens (an equal number of each sex) measure 12 to 13 mm. in width of bill and are obviously from a different colony. We consider the first batch is a large-billed race of *banksii*† and the second a small-billed race of the same species. The averages for the two batches are: Width of bill, 14.3 mm.; length of bill, 28.9 mm.; wing 188.4 mm. These measurements are not included in the above key, because the specimens came to hand later.

Between the sexes there is not any appreciable difference in measurements.

Bush-Lark as Mimic.—On 15 August, 1926, the first Bush-Lark was heard singing in this district. The range of bird calls imitated was limited and not until about six weeks later was a full range heard. In the course of the singing, notes of the following birds were recorded though not in the order named:—Pipit, Welcome Swallow, Singing Honeyeater, Dusky Wood-Swallow, Stubble Quail, Red-capped Dotterel, Willie Wagtail, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Magpie-Lark, Red-backed Parrot, and House Sparrow. Several bird-calls were heard which I could not identify.

It would be very interesting to have notes on this wonderful singer from other localities. I presume it is a mimic, for I have now heard a few notes of the House Sparrow in its song, and last year, I was certain it imitated a few notes of the English Starling.

The full notes of each species mentioned above were not given, but a very easily recognised part of some of them was quite sufficient to give me the pleasure of writing this article.—HARRY H. NEWELL, Hindmarsh Island, South Australia (6/11/26).

[Mimicry of other bird-calls on the part of the Bush-Lark is recorded by Mr. C. F. Belcher in his book, *Birds of the Geelong District, Victoria* (1914). It now seems probable that Australia possesses more "mocking-birds" than any other country.—EDITOR.]

*In the "H. L. White Coll." National Museum, Melbourne, and referred to by F. L. Whitlock, in this issue, p. 154.

†Referred to by Mathews as *P. vittatus missus*—"Birds of Australia," II, p. 212.