

elsewhere for many years, and having travelled extensively from north to south of the state, and having known the bird from many localities. The only differences are in colour phases, which are partly variation and partly seasonal. Otherwise, in size, shape, and structure, nest building, colour of eggs, and general habits, the two so-called species for New South Wales are identical.

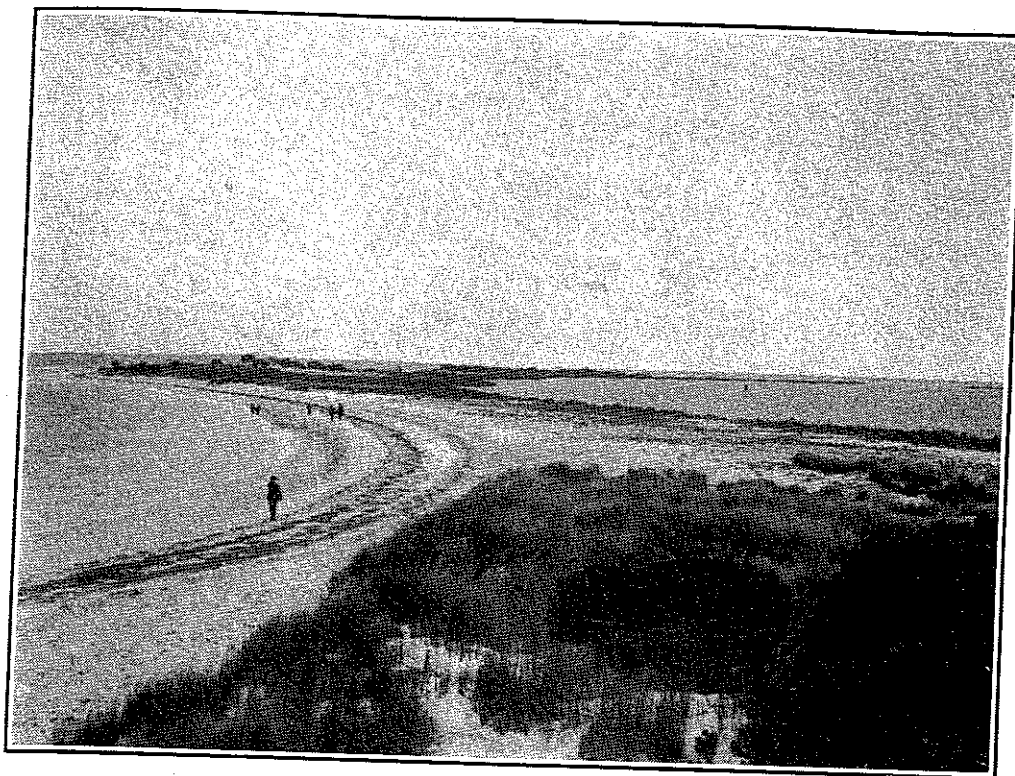
A Stormy Petrel Nocturne

By A. G. CAMPBELL, R.A.O.U., Kilsyth, Vic.

Opposite Port Phillip Heads, the water gate of a great metropolis, lies Mud Island. The eddying tide swirled about the sandbanks and marshy shores of the inner lagoon, the crisp sea air stirred the saltbush and the samphire, an easterly wind banked up unusual clouds, and the sun sank in unforgettable splendour of silver and rose. Sky and sea dominated the narrow strip of land on which we awaited the homecoming of the little White-faced Storm-Petrels (*Pelagodroma marina*).

To the naturalist there are times not meant for chatter but for contemplation, when the voices of the crowd are hushed and other deeper senses have full play. Long forgotten faculties shake themselves free and a receptive mind is the key-note. There is a pleasure simple and unalloyed in reading a chapter of nature we can understand. This scene is one to stir a chord of harmony in the naturalist that lies deep in all of us.

The first birds to arrive from the ocean waste came about 9.15 p.m., more than an hour after sunset. They came in small coveys, beating up channel from the Heads and making slow progress against the wind. Silently they passed our vantage point, each bird to find its own particular burrow wherein a brooding mate awaited its evening meal. This went on for several hours, but at no time were the birds in great numbers at any one spot. They probably distributed over the islet without delay, after the long journey from the sea. While the name Stormy Petrel has come to suggest erratic and violent ways, the bird itself is of the quietest disposition possible. Only eight inches in length, of delicate build, it may feebly peck at an intruding hand, or gently protest when removed from its egg. The wonder is that so tiny a sprite should be called to a life on the ocean billow, coming ashore only to rear its offspring and performing this duty only under the protective mantle of dark-



Portion of Mud Island, showing inner "lagoon" at right.



At a "petrelry" of the White-faced Storm Petrel, Mud Island.

Photos. by Miss M. L. Wigan, R.A.O.U.

ness, with as little friction as possible with other life around.

After a few hours' rest under the lee of some bushes we were awakened about 2.30 a.m. by little cries overhead. The flash of a powerful torch revealed little Petrels in the air, their rounded wings and white undersurface showing up clearly. The wind had died away completely. The main business of the night was nearing its close. Mates had been fed, the first early chicks provisioned for another day, and the birds were now collecting in the air prior to departure for the open sea. Observations showed that some birds had changed places with their mates, while some were taking an airing before returning to their task of incubation. The focus of activity in the air is in the zero hours. Within the rays of the light twelve to twenty birds could be seen at one time wheeling or circling about, or hovering to investigate the strangers. Occasionally a bird would drop on to the burrows and every now and then one would rise therefrom. The torch's rays disclosed birds in the air all over the petrelry and caused several to dash in bewilderment towards the glare. In flight their wings made no sound, but the tapping of their feet as they skimmed the water could be distinctly heard. By 3.30 a.m., at the first flush of dawn, all the Petrels had disappeared. Curlews and other sea birds began to call to one another, and not long afterward a pair of Swamp Hawks and several Silver Gulls patrolled the banks seeking what they might devour.

A colour variation of the Crested Bronze-wing Pigeon.— Among a flock of ten Crested Bronze-wings (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), which flew on to the garden fence the other morning, I noted one of them was of a totally different colour, practically the only parts of the bird that were normal in colour being the bronze on the wing and the red legs. The shape and size was typically that of *Ocyphaps lophotes*, but there the likeness ended. His general colour was brown; lower back, upper tail coverts, primaries, and secondaries, black; nape, crown and crest, slate; legs, very red. Perhaps the dark colour of the body generally made the colour of the legs stand out so conspicuously. The bronze on the wings seemed to show out more distinctly than on the others; this also may have been on account of the dark background. Had I been capable of making a decent skin I would have secured it for the Museum. I am sure it would have been of interest as a curiosity.—N. GEARY, R.A.O.U., Dalby, Qld.