

Correspondence

To the Editor.

Sir,—In the *News Chronicle* (London) of June 1, 1932, appears a review of the book, *Hunted Through Central Asia*, by P. S. Nazaroff. The review states that the author, a man of science, was engaged in exploring the mineral wealth of Central Turkestan when he was captured and imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. When fleeing across Central Asia he observed a fight amongst Sparrows quoted by the abovementioned review in the following words:—

“As I rode along I came upon a curious spectacle, which I cannot describe as anything else than a Sparrows’ prize-fight. Along the road were groups of these birds sitting in a circle on the road, while in the middle of the arena thus formed two cock Sparrows were engaged in deadly conflict. The audience was obviously absorbed in the fight with intense interest.”

Would the birds be *sitting*? I have an impression that out in the open the sitting position is only assumed by a sick bird.—Yours, etc.,

C. C. DORNBUSCH.

Warwick, Queensland, 13/7/32.

To the Editor.

Sir,—In December of 1929 we were visited by a number of Quail of a variety that I had not seen before, neither can I find them in any of the Australian bird books I have had. In size they appeared to be similar to the King Quail, but did not resemble that bird in colour; they were black, or almost so, on the upper parts, except the rump, which was bright red. I did not handle a bird, but from what I could see of the under parts, I should say they were slate or slaty-blue. The call was very much like that of a kitten of the domesticated cat. These Quail remained here from December to April of the year above mentioned. A few birds were again observed in October of the following year (1930). They lived principally in the cultivated paddocks, usually in the lucerne crops. When the mower was at work they remained in the standing lucerne until the knife was almost up to them, then rose for a short flight and landed with a dive into the crop.

In Vol. I, *Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, by Herbert C. Robinson, a complete description of the Blue-breasted Button-Quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis chinensis*) is given. Mr. Robinson includes Australia in the range of a slightly modified form of the Blue-breasted Quail. The description

given compares with the colouring and habits of the Quail I have seen here, so possibly the birds had extended their range further south than usual in the years I have mentioned having seen them here. I would like to hear, through *The Emu* or from any readers who may know the Blue-breasted Button-Quail in Australia, what part of this country is usually visited by them and at what time of the year do they come to us from Malay. I should also like to know if we have an Australian representative of the Blue-breasted Button-Quail that is native here.—Yours, etc.,

E. A. R. LORD.

Airleas, Murphy's Creek, Qld., 5/9/32.

To the Editor.

Dear Sir,—In *The Emu*, Vol. XXXII., p. 31, Mr. A. G. Kilpatrick gives a list of the birds of Rottnest Island, W.A., and includes the White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax fuscescens*) as a breeding species. In *The Emu*, Vol. XX., pp. 149-168, I published an article on The Birds of the Swan River District, including Rottnest Island, and was able to include all the other four species of Cormorant as common in the district, stating that the Pied Cormorant (*P. varius*) bred on the islets off Rottnest, but I could obtain no evidence that *P. fuscescens* had ever been seen on the west coast. In *The Emu*, Vol. XXI., p. 272, I pointed out that there was no satisfactory evidence for its occurrence on either the west or the east coast. It appears to be confined to Tasmania and the south coast of the continent. Unless therefore Mr. Kilpatrick collected specimens to confirm his identification, I think he must have mistaken *P. varius* for *P. fuscescens*. If he is correct, his observation greatly extends the range of the latter.

May I add that I still have some copies of my article on The Swan River Birds, referred to above, and should be glad to send one to any ornithologist specially interested in the birds of that region.—Yours, etc.,

W. B. ALEXANDER.

120 Croydon Road, Reigate, England, Aug. 14, 1932.

No apology is offered for the fact that this issue of *The Emu* is of smaller size than usual. The remedy lies with members, who are expected to contribute to their own journal.—Ed.