

Report of Bird Observers Club

In June an outing was arranged to the You Yangs and the granite slopes of Flinders Peak inspected. Forty-four species of birds were identified, including Spotted Quail-Thrush and Bronze Cuckoo, besides five kinds of Robins and seven of Honeyeaters—a very good record for a day in winter. A unique feature lies in the forestry plantations of hundreds of acres of sugar gums and ironbark trees, many reaching a foot in diameter, every one of which was planted by the hand of man. On the peak are many curious examples of distorted wind-blown trees, while to the south side is a unique granite rock covering a surface of about four acres and rising 170 feet, which the Club members think should be made a feature of attraction. On June 20 a lecture by Mr. Tom Tregellas was devoted to insect and other small life in the bush, much of which serves as food for many of our birds.

There was a good attendance at the Lyrebird outing in July, when Mr. Tregellas undertook to pilot members through the mountain reserves about 30 miles from Melbourne, where there is still to be found the primeval beauty of the Gippsland bush, tall white gums overshadowing the aromatic dogwoods and humid ferns, and where the Lyrebird still lives in natural conditions, which, it is hoped, will long continue. From wooded hills came the rare music of Australia's mocking bird and the illusion that a dozen feathered songsters were calling in the wildwood. With care and patience a male bird was stalked among the undergrowth as he fed about the forest floor, occasionally pausing on some mound or log to break into song. A female was flushed from her nest on a mouldy bank, and another nest was found completed and ready for the egg.

At the July meeting the members were entertained by Mr. H. R. Balfour, "With Camera in Central Australia", a record of a pleasure trip last winter to Darwin. Many excellent and artistic pictures and a happy description of experiences connected with them held attention for two full hours. Plains, miles wide, extraordinary stretches of gibber, endless sandhills, and river courses containing nothing but sand, led back to the centre highlands, where knife-edged mountains with occasional waterholes and palmy oases gave variety to the scene in this strange arid land. Birds were not plentiful anywhere.

On August 7, with the promise of Springtime in the air, a bright day was spent upon the sandy moorlands between Cheltenham and the sea, the haunt of the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and the Striated Field-Wren, neither of which is easy to find in the short tough heather. A Kestrel entertained us with its perfect hovering poises, English Skylarks, acclimatised about the golf links, poured forth their "shrill delight", while Flame Robins tripped daintily over the greens. At the August meeting Mr. H. Clinton gave a well-illustrated lecture on "Parasites", the little creatures which prey upon other forms in nature and on man himself. Later in the month the League of Nature Lovers extended us an invitation to visit the wildflower garden of Mr. J. B. Howie at Vermont, where over 100 species of native plants are thriving. Many of these being in flower are the centre of attraction for native birds. The evening was devoted to fine pictures of wildflowers by Mr. F. J. Bishop.

A novel and useful action on our programme was the planting of ornamental gum trees at Wattle Park, a clump of pink flowered ironbarks "for the birds", and also a single tree in the memorial bed in memory of the late Dr. Leach.

The outing in September was to Toolern Vale. The Museum winter meetings have been very well attended, and our thanks are due to the Director for facilities given for examining first hand the great collections of Australian bird skins.