

## **Bird Cabin, Toolern Vale, Victoria**

On October 28, 1933, a bird observation cabin, the first of its kind in Victoria, on the property of Mr. V. R. Davey, R.A.O.U., at Toolern Vale, was opened.

About 70 persons were present. In the warm air of an early summer afternoon, with the forest casting long shadows upon the scene, the function was a novel and pleasant one. The tuneful calls of many native birds accompanied the remarks of the speakers. Mr. Davey stated the idea had grown in his mind that this sanctuary, in the centre of a fine district, would be just the place for naturalists to congregate, both for pleasure and for general observations in natural history. He had erected the cabin, not for profit, but as a gesture to assist in this objective. Photographers should make full use of opportunities among the great numbers of birds congregated there. Mr. C. E. Bryant had presented two enlarged photos. of two subjects already obtained in the district, and these are hanging in the cabin.

Mr. A. G. Campbell, speaking for the Union, drew attention to the historical setting—the You Yangs of Matthew Flinders and Mount Cotteril of John Batman being within sight of the door—and it was under the shadow of the latter peak that his father, one of the founders of the R.A.O.U., spent his earliest years. In later days, the country about Melton was considered to be the best collecting ground near Melbourne.

Mr. V. H. Miller, president of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, congratulated Mr. Davey on his public spirit, saying that he thought that the people generally were sadly lacking in a knowledge and a love for the native fauna and flora. Mr. E. S. Hanks said that much practical work should now be undertaken in these comfortable quarters, and much might be learned by banding young birds reared in this sanctuary. There were also some fine trees that Mr. Davey should label with their names, as is done in the National Park, Tasmania. Mr. H. E. D. Stevens, president of the Leach Memorial Club, appreciated the attractions of this unique cabin, the first of its kind in this State, and they all knew the district to be a fine one for birds. Mr. H. A. Purnell said that on behalf of the Geelong Naturalists Club, one of the oldest nature societies, he was very pleased to take part in this function.

On behalf of the Gould League of Bird Lovers, Mr. H. N. Beck urged the people of this district to support this movement strongly, so that their children would grow up to appreciate and protect our own birds and flowers. The president of the Shire (Mr. J. Beatty) spoke appreciatively of nature study—"it will surprise residents that such unusual interest can be found here." In formally opening the cabin, Mr. White, M.L.A., said it represented man's feelings and desire after more knowledge of nature and its ways, a study that could only be of great benefit to all concerned, both young and old. The prizes won by local scholars in the recent Gould League competitions were later presented by Mr. A. H. Chisholm.

After tea in the open all the Melbourne visitors repaired to the Shire Hall, Toolern Vale, and met with a number of residents in an endeavour to interest them in the formation of a bird club. Mr. A. G. Campbell gave a short talk on birds, illustrated with lantern slides of the big timber country and of the Murray frontage; and, by describing some of the bird life, sought to show that bird lore was a part of nature study, and nature was a part of human life. To a farming community great pleasure and good would be found in seeking to know more of the surrounding district. The scope of a club could embrace agricultural and social matters as well.

Messrs. Miller, Stevens, Beatty, and Chisholm also spoke, and then it was moved that a bird club be formed at Toolern Vale, which

was passed without dissent. Many of the ways and means and proposed rules were discussed, under the guidance of the Shire president, who accepted the office of president of the new club. Mr. Henry Robinson accepted the secretaryship, and Mr. Davey was appointed leader.

The Cabin should prove a boon to those desirous of making use of it. Members wishing to do so should make application to the Hon. Editor—a condition imposed by Mr. Davey—to ascertain that the Cabin is not already booked.

---