

# The Emu

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"Birds of a Feather"

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## Gould Commemorative Issue

When the suggestion was made to publish a special number of *The Emu* to commemorate John Gould's visit to Australia an appeal for information was made through the scientific journals and the press—with practically no result. Incidentally a letter seeking details of Gould or his family or affairs was published in English newspapers, but no reply was forthcoming, whereas a similar appeal made recently by Mr. A. H. Chisholm resulted in the discovery of much valuable information.

With such a poor response to the original appeal the project was nearly abandoned, but some helpful suggestions from Mr. Iredale being made, and followed, several members promised contributions, and industriously applied themselves to gathering material. The manuscript arrived from various authors in a most piecemeal manner, and the editing became, to say the least, an exacting task, consequent upon the necessity of endeavouring to avoid duplication. It was soon realized that the pruning of repetitive matter would have seriously affected the continuity of some contributions, and readers must therefore be content to accept as inevitable a certain amount of repetition, as the Editor has been compelled to do. Had more time been available, or had it been possible to hold manuscript until all such was in hand a more serious attempt to avoid "overlapping" may have been possible, but it was essential to have copy set up in type as received in order that the issue of the Gould number would correspond approximately with the centenary of Gould's arrival in Australia.

Careful contributors have, in some cases, made their own check of quoted figures and references concerning Gould's output. Where others have adopted available records without question, it has not been attempted to reconcile differing data.

The discovery referred to by Mr. Chisholm will doubtless clear up many queries concerning Gould and his travels, and

his associates. Thus, for example, the letter from Gilbert dated Port Essington, September 19, 1840, aids, to some extent, in fixing definitely the period of Gilbert's visit to that place. In this connection, also, with limited time only available, no attempt was made to endeavour to apply the facts to be culled from the Gilbert or other letters to the interrogations of contributors. Readers may make their own inferences in this respect.

Some difficulty was felt with regard to Mr. Chisholm's contributions. The transcription of the letters, typed at the office of the High Commissioner in London, appears to have followed faithfully the originals, for in the only original document made available to the Editor, viz. the "contract" dated January 21, 1842, between Gould and Gilbert, the typed copy letter agrees with the handwritten original. But the author of the two papers had apparently thereafter made some emendations, and in the case of the other letters, it therefore became difficult to ascertain the form in which the letters were written. The Editor has had to exercise a discretion in this respect, and cannot vouch for the exactness of the reproduction. It is considered, however, that, generally speaking, the correspondence, etc., as now published, agrees with the originals more than is shown in the submitted manuscript.

Several of the plates published with this issue, including the colour plate, have already appeared in *The Emu*. Their association with Gould and his achievements is the justification for their inclusion.

EDITOR.

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## John Gould: The Bird Man

By TOM IREDALE, Sydney, N.S.W.

One hundred years ago an Englishman landed in Australia upon a remarkable quest—the investigation of our bird-life for the publication of a work upon the subject. Probably his most sanguine anticipations did not foresee the results actually secured. It was a venturesome undertaking, as only fifty years previously—a very short time in the history of a country—Phillip had made the first settlement at Port Jackson. No white settlers had paved the way; it had been absolutely virgin land, and at first sight not too attractive, either. Yet in that short space of time hardy pioneers had launched out in every State, Tasmania, Western Australia, Northern Australia, Moreton Bay, South Australia, and Melbourne coming into being. Still the settlements were of very slight extent, and one at Port Essington of dubious stability, whilst the immense interior was absolutely unknown, the phantasy of a huge inland sea