

Obituary

JOHN SUTTON (1866-1938)

Through the death of Mr. John Sutton at Fullarton, South Australia, on November 22, 1938, South Australian ornithology has suffered a great loss, which is particularly keenly felt by the South Australian Museum of which he was the Honorary Curator of Ornithology, and by the South Australian Ornithological Association, of which he had been the meticulous secretary over a period of sixteen years. Mr. Sutton was born at Castlemaine, Victoria, in 1866, and spent the early years of his life in that town and in Bendigo. Entering the National Bank of Victoria, he retired at the age of 52, and the leisure thus afforded enabled him shortly afterwards to take up the serious study of birds. Thanks to his friendship and close association with the late Dr. A. M. Morgan, he soon acquired a sound field knowledge of his subject, became a keen and reliable bird observer, and recorded, with a thoroughness and clearness of caligraphy reminiscent of his bank training, full notes of all he saw and heard that had any bearing whatever on his chosen field of activity. For example, many a time the writer has been asked by him to identify some flower or twig from a plant in which a nest had been built or which had been incorporated in the nesting material or was otherwise associated with his observations.

During the long association of eleven years with Dr. Morgan, during which he was Assistant Honorary Curator, the two of them dealt methodically with some 15,000 specimens of Australian and foreign birds in the Museum collection, not only identifying and labelling, but preparing, also, a complete card index which is a model for clarity and accuracy. His "The Birds of South Australia"—a list with all the records carefully checked over—first published in 1923 and with a second edition in 1927 (*S.A. Orn.*, vol. 9, p. 55), has been of great service to all interested in the birds of that State. All who were associated with him held him in the highest esteem, and ever found him prepared to go to very considerable trouble to ascertain some information desired, to compare some specimen or to verify some reference. In the *South Australian Ornithologist* for January, 1939, a full account appears of his active part in the study of ornithology, together with a bibliography of his writings. Of that periodical he was for many years virtually the editor-in-chief, and in that rôle and in his offices of Honorary Curator and of Secretary of the Association, he has left examples of thoroughness and of capacity to guide and to inspire those who of necessity succeed him.

To *The Emu* the deceased contributed two papers in collaboration with others—*vide* vol. XXIII, p. 67, and vol.

xxviii, p. 1. The latter, in conjunction with the late Dr. A. M. Morgan, was a critical examination of bones of the extinct Kangaroo Island Emu.—J. B. C.

SPENCER ROBERTS

After a brief illness, Dr. Spencer Roberts died at Toowoomba, Queensland, on February 19, 1939. He was born in that place and educated at the local Grammar School, taking his medical degree at Sydney University. He began practice at Toowoomba twenty years ago, and, except for seven years at Stanthorpe, remained in that place. In his profession he keenly interested himself in immunization against diphtheria and since 1931 had tested thousands of children in that connection. He succeeded the late Dr. Freshney, in 1929, as Government Medical Officer of Health at Toowoomba, and he was Medical Superintendent of the district hospital for many years.

Dr. Roberts was well known for his interest in botany and birds, particularly the latter. He joined the R.A.O.U. in 1919 and in *The Emu* for 1922 (vol. XXI, p. 242) appeared his first contribution, "Prince Edward's Lyre-bird at Home." He had investigated the country known as the Granite Belt around Stanthorpe and had discovered a "different" Lyrebird, to which A. H. Chisholm later gave the name of *Menura edwardi*, but which is now considered a subspecies of *M. novæ-hollandiæ*. Further papers on the same area and bird, and on other subjects, appeared thereafter, and Dr. Roberts had recently been endeavouring to glean as much data as possible concerning the Straw-necked Ibis in connection with a project involving the R.A.O.U. and the C.S.I.R. He was largely responsible for the scheme for fencing off part of Lake Clarendon as a sanctuary for water birds, and he concerned himself in all measures for bird protection.

One of his sons, Mr. Peter Roberts, is a member of our Union.—C. E. B.

Correspondence

GILBERT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA—A CORRECTION

To the Editor

Sir,—It is usually annoying to discover that one has made an error, but when the error is due to one's own carelessness the annoyance is intensified. That is the case with me at present.

In the January issue of *The Emu* I recorded having searched the files of the *Perth Gazette* and noted that the