

## Stray Feathers

**Birds and Cratægus Berries.**—Being laid up in bed, for a time, beside a landscape window, from which I have a good view of a large bush of *Cratægus* that is covered with orange berries, I have been watching the Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and other birds that visit the bush. The Blackbirds gobble up so many berries that I wonder that they can then fly.

One day a pair of White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga penicillata*) came to the bush. One took a berry in its bill and flew away with it. Next day, the bird, or its mate, took another. I was unable to see whether the berries were eaten, and was surprised that the 'Greenies' should be interested in them, especially as they were rather a large mouthfull for a honeyeater. When the birds made their third and fourth visits, I was ready for them. With my nose against the window and the birds in better positions, I saw their tongues protrude and enter the berries where they had split with age. A Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) was next on the scene, hovering like a humming-bird before each berry as it inserted its bill. Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) also took their share.

On examining and tasting the berries, I found that they were all split and tasted only slightly sweet—not sweet enough, I thought, to attract honeyeaters. The berries came away from the stalks very easily, which probably accounts for the birds taking the first ones in their bills. I am now satisfied that they had no intention of removing the berries. —MARC COHN, Bendigo, Vic., 11/8/42.

**Clutch-Size of Introduced Wild Birds.**—In connection with an investigation that he is conducting on the internal mechanism of clutch-size control and the possible heritable nature of that aspect, R. E. Moreau is desirous of obtaining data as to the clutch-size of introduced birds in Australia, together with details of the latitudes between which the data has been gathered. Will members with available data forward details to the Hon. Editor, who will undertake to send them to Mr. Moreau.

**A New Name.**—In the *Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum*, vol. xxv, 1896 (preface December 16, 1895), on p. 405, a bird from Canton Island in the Phoenix Group is described as *Æstrelata parvirostris* of Peale.

The measurements are—wing 266 mm., tail 108, culmen 38, tarsus 33, middle toe and claw 44.

In *A Supplement to the Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands*, 1936, pp. 80-82, I give particulars of *Pterodroma alba*, including the synonyms *parvirostris*, *wortheni*, and *oliveri*. On plate 80 I figure the type of the last-named.

The average of the above series is—wing 280 mm., tail 114, culmen 27, tarsus 33.

The birds from Canton Island differ in their measurements as above stated and can be called *Pterodroma alba cantonia* subsp. nov.

The Canton bird breeds in June or July, whilst the Christmas Island form breeds in January.—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Sydney, N.S.W., 30/6/42.

**The Lambert Drawings.**—These drawings, consisting of three volumes of paintings of birds, all supposedly Australian, are in the same state now as they were when Latham examined them in 1799. All who have seen them agree that some of the paintings are crude, but very many of them are good and easily identified.

While Gray was working through these drawings, he observed that as they were the types of Latham's latin diagnosis, obvious corrections in the nomenclature were necessary. Of the names suggested by Gray, some have, and others have not, been accepted. Gray said that *Corvus cyanoleuca* was the correct name for the Magpie-Lark and that *Loxia fascians* was indeterminable. Gould rejected the former and used the latter for the Jacky Winter. Gray's action was correct in each case. In other words Gray's identification was better than Gould's. He also said that *Muscicapa cucullata* should be used for the Hooded Robin and Gould agreed.

Gray did not name the volume and number of the painting when he published his 'names proposed.' When he saw the type drawing with *Turdus inquietus* written on it he said that it was the *Seisura volitans* of Vigors and Horsfield: there was no necessity to quote the volume in which the drawing occurred nor its number. That correction has been accepted. When he saw the type drawing of *Turdus volitans* he said that it was *not* the *Seisura volitans* of Vigor and Horsfield and proposed it as a different species in the same genus.

In amplification of my remarks on page 64 of the July *Emu*, when I asked that the Lambert set be sent to South Kensington (where I compared the paintings critically with the Watling set in conjunction with Mr. H. W. England, the Librarian, who wrote on the Watling drawings the corresponding volume and number in the Lambert set) the intensive examination revealed that *Turdus volitans* was not in the Watlings and I was compelled to advocate the use of this name for the Willy Wagtail, the type painting being of that bird.

When we have sets of bird paintings or drawings such as the Lambert set, Forster's and others in the British Museum, that contain types of birds described by workers, we are on sure ground. Defective descriptions of birds

where no type exists are a trouble and in many cases remain indeterminable. With a recognizable painting or drawing all doubt is removed.

We must bear in mind that all the important facts about the Lambert drawings have been public knowledge for ninety-nine years. Also that the latin name stands only on the latin diagnosis. In the case of *Turdus volitans* we find the diagnosis is: *T. supra niger subtus albas . . . capite colloque nigris . . . cauda elongata apice integra*. The words "capite colloque nigris" can apply only and accurately to the Willy Wagtail.—GREGORY M. MATHEWS, Sydney, N.S.W., 15/7/42.

## Correspondence

### WHAT IS TURDUS VOLITANS LATHAM?

To the Editor,  
Sir,

The onus is on Mr. Mathews to prove beyond doubt that Latham's description of *Turdus volitans* applies to the Black-and-white Fantail. His rejoinder (p. 63) fails to dispose of the arguments brought forward against that contention. I am surprised that he should lay such stress on Strickland's remark that it was from the Lambert drawings alone that Latham compiled the descriptions of the Australian birds treated in the *Second Supplement*, 1801. Surely it is unnecessary to remind him that Latham attributed his material not only to Lambert but to General Davies, John Hunter, the Leverian Museum, the British Museum and others. The fact that Latham wrote identifying names on the Lambert plates for the owner's edification cannot be taken to imply that they must all *ipso facto* be types of the species concerned. Take for instance Latham's description of the White-headed Finch, *Fringilla leucocephala* (= *Zonæginthus guttatus*), where he stated: "From the drawings of General Davies. Among the drawings of Mr. Lambert I find a bird greatly corresponding with the above . . ." Presumably the Lambert plate mentioned carries the name *Fringilla leucocephala* but Mathews himself has already agreed that the General Davies material must be regarded as its type (*Aust. Av. Rec.*, vol. IV, p. 114). There are other instances where Latham compared *inter se* the several sets of drawings and other material in working out his descriptions and now one and now another source is definitely indicated as the 'type.' In the case of *Turdus volitans* no authority is cited, but at the end of the series of his *Turdus* forms, in the account of the Punctuated Thrush (p. 188), Latham wrote: "For the description of several of the above, I am indebted to my friend Mr. Lambert, and for many to real specimens from time to time