

Unusual Nest of King Quails.—During last November a nest constructed of dried grasses and built within the confined space of a half-open rusty jam tin was sent to me. The tin measured four and a half inches in length and three and a quarter inches in diameter, whilst the aperture at the opened end measured two inches by two and a half inches. The opening would be large enough for a bird the size of a Starling to enter through. In the nest was one fertile egg, one dead featherless young bird, which unfortunately was not kept, and the remains of a broken egg. The nest was accidentally found in a rubbish tip on the edge of a mangrove swamp in the vicinity of the suburb of Concord, N.S.W.

Both nest and egg were exhibited at the December meeting of the R.A.O.U., Sydney, and the egg, which is of an olive green colour, speckled freely with minute reddish brown markings and measuring one inch in length, was identified as being that of the King Quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis*.) Previous to this I did not know that the King Quail was to be seen at Concord as it is a fairly well settled suburban area.

I would be interested to learn if any other naturalists have known the King Quail to seek such an unorthodox place in which to shelter its nest.—LAWRENCE C. HAINES, Haberfield, Sydney, N.S.W., 4/2/43.

Reviews

Birds and Books.—The relative merits of autobiography and biography might provide scope for argument, but the personal incidents associated with the acquisition of a great library and the publication of a great work are definitely matters for the former. Reviewing from the strictly-ornithological viewpoint, one tends to refer but generally to 'domestic' matters in Gregory Mathews' booklet *Birds and Books* (Verity Hewitt Bookshop, Canberra, 1942), and to pass quickly over matters of family and historical interest, and even the author's early life in Australia—droving, mining, blackfellows and the bush and its life. And the 'New Life' in England—hunting, touring and associations with the celebrities of the scientific world—this is but the 'lead-up' to the main theme.

In the chapters dealing with 'Bird Collections' and 'The Library' is a concise résumé of the author's labours in the dual task that he assigned unto himself. One would wish for more stories of rare books discovered by chance or 'pursued' with zeal and patience until a library was built that, reposing here, as it now does, may direct the researches of scientists to Australia, particularly in view of the widespread destruction in Europe, with a corresponding increase in the importance of our centres.

The acquisition of the skin collection—the largest and most representative, it is claimed, ever amassed—involved trips to every part of Australia and introduces a band of well-known bird-men—Rogers, Kemp, McLennan, Carter and others.

Prior to the appearance of the *Birds of Australia*, Dresser's *Birds of Europe* was the largest faunal work extant. But that work became

relegated to second place when the 16 volumes (including bibliographies, checklists and supplements) of the *Birds of Australia* was completed after 26 years' strenuous work. This is the result of the research and labour—a result of which the author is 'natural' enough to feel proud.—C.E.B.

Bird Display.—Something wider than mere courtship ceremony is apparent immediately one opens Edward A. Armstrong's *Bird Display* (Cambridge University Press, 1942—pp. 1-381 + 1-xvi). A further perusal involves one in a consideration of every possible kind of display performance of the avian world, of which ceremonial gaping, courtship feeding, 'trance' or disablement states, injury feigning, social ceremonies, arena displays, territory performances and song (these are chapter headings) may be mentioned as illustrative. The field is world-wide, the literature consulted and quoted is enormous—there are over 700 references in the bibliography.

Ceremony plays a most important part in the lives of birds and many ceremonial activities are responses to emotional urges, one action impelling to others, as, for example, the connection between nuptial display and nest construction, although ceremonies are not always readily distinguishable, in some cases the relative associations being multiple. Ceremony is purposeful. It is "man's antidote to disorder and frenzy" but not man's only. It serves distinct purposes and gives rise to stimuli that form an integral part of the whole pattern of bird behaviour. This doctrine of 'releasers' has been brought prominently to the fore of late, particularly by Lorenz who says that the whole sociology of higher animals is built on releasers and innate patterns.

The sexual aspect of display is largely paramount and this physiological side and its effect on the reproductive cycle is fully dealt with. What may be regarded as elaborate ceremony may be an evolved process to synchronize the rhythms of male and female. There are many mutual and reciprocal acts. Often these tend to become social, and co-operative nesting and communal activities, with definite influences on the breeding cycle and certain advantages accruing, arise, sociality probably reaching its zenith with colonial sea-birds.

The significance of display is naturally dealt with, in such a work as this, chiefly from the psychological aspect, but the author, in dealing with the implications of related ceremonies, suggests that homologous customs are deeply significant and may be evidence of closer relationships than are admitted in systematic classification.—C.E.B.

Obituary

W. J. PAGE

Mr. W. J. Page, late of 'Quinby Apiaries,' Emu Vale, Queensland, died on September 30, 1942, and is survived by a widow and five adult children. He had been a member of the R.A.O.U. since 1924.

Although not a contributor to *The Emu*, Mr. Page, an apiarist of ability, was one of those out-of-doors men to whom the bush and the birds made a strong appeal, and his interest produced a knowledge and an enthusiasm that was transmitted to his associates. He presented to the R.A.O.U., some years ago, a number of well-prepared skins of birds collected locally. He held a diploma of taxidermy issued at Omaha, U.S.A.—C.E.B.