

ing of the boundaries of their range since 1840. These are *Pyrrhoxenus brunneus* (Gould), *Certhionyx variegatus* (Lesson) and *Meliphaga plumula* (Gould): the specimen of the last-named is now missing from the Heine Collection. Both of the honeyeaters are recorded by present-day ornithologists as not now occurring as far south as York, whence it was assumed Gilbert procured the type material of *plumula*.

We know now, however, as the result of Major Whittell's discovery of some of Gilbert's original field notes, preserved in the Queensland Museum, that Gilbert, and Johnston Drummond—from whom Preiss purchased some of his specimens—first collected *Certhionyx* at Wongan Hills (*Emu*, vol. 51, p. 28). It was here no doubt that all these species were actually obtained, and not the York district, as understood at the present day. Therefore this new information would eliminate the supposed geographical discrepancies with present-day conditions.

## More Observations on Swifts

By NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Victoria

Among the migrants, swifts, because of their sudden appearances and departures, interest some of us above all other bird wanderers. Yet we know little of their numbers or where they spend their time till the next visit to any given locality. If sufficient observers would keep notes we might solve these problems, so as an incentive I give the particulars I gathered pertaining to these birds in the Portland district during the early part of 1951.

### SPINE-TAILED SWIFTS

January 21.—A very large flock of these birds (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) hawking over heath and swamps at Mt. Richmond from 11.30 a.m. till 1 p.m. Birds high up and no apparent directional flight. Barometer low and steady. Calm and hot, cool change followed. No rain.

January 27.—A large flock flying low over Mt. Richmond heaths from 6.30 a.m. till 9 a.m. Hundreds of Fairy Martins (*Hylochelidon ariel*) joined the Swifts in dives over a fast-drying swamp where insects were evidently abundant; both species almost brushed our heads as we watched the display. Hot, calm. Barometer falling. No rain.

January 28.—A very large flock over Portland from 6.30 a.m. till 9.30 a.m., with a few birds still about at noon. A few Fork-tailed Swifts (*Apus pacificus*) were with this flock—one of the largest I have even seen in this district. Claude Austin was at Mt. Richmond (12 miles) and saw both species there at the same time as I saw them in Portland. Very hot, clear. North wind. Barometer steady and falling later in day. No rain.

January 29.—Swifts of both species flying very high over Portland from 7 a.m. till 10 a.m. Very hot. Calm. Barometer steady and rising in afternoon. No rain.

February 8.—A few birds flying south over Portland at 4 p.m. Very hot, light east breeze. Barometer falling. No rain.

March 3.—Brig. H. Officer reported a large flock flying low down off and around the coast at Point Danger (three miles from Portland) about noon. Weather conditions not noted.

March 7.—Brig. Officer saw one bird fly past him at Cape Grant. North wind and warm.

March 11.—A large flock passed over Portland from the south about 5 p.m. Clear and hot, S.E. breeze. Barometer falling. No rain.

March 29.—About fourteen birds at Tyrendarra, noon. Came from east and returned same direction, probably out-flyers of a flock. A very late appearance, as after the middle of March I have seldom seen swifts in this district. Cool, strong S.W. wind, misty. Barometer rising.

#### FORK-TAILED SWIFTS

January 18.—A small flock seen by C. Beaglehole near Mt. Richmond 11 a.m. On same morning Percy Finck saw four birds of the same species at Heathmere. Weather: Hot, light S.E. breeze. Barometer falling. No rain followed.

January 28 and 29.—See foregoing references under these dates. \* \* \*

The season under review has been one of the best for swifts that we have ever had in the Portland district, both for the size of flocks and the number of them. Their appearance, as usual, has generally been when the barometer is falling, in other words the birds follow the recurring meteorological depressions. This fact leads me to advance the theory that the number of swifts in south-east Australia is confined to very few flocks, which, owing to the birds' fast flight, appear at many places in one day. Only observations as suggested will clear this matter.

**Corrections.**—In the interests of the records it should be pointed out that in my note on 'Gouldian Tragedies' in *The Emu* for July (vol. 51, p. 79) a printer's error turned the date of the death of John Gilbert from June 28, 1845, to April of that year. Actually, in April of '45, Gilbert, very much alive, was making useful bird-observations in the Burdekin Valley and was taking the first specimens of what became known as the White-browed Robin, *Poecilodryas superciliosa*.

Another minor error occurs in my note on *Hylacola* in *The Emu* for April, p. 238—a previous reference to the subject is given as vol. 47, p. 36, whereas it should read vol. 47, p. 367.—A. H. Chisholm, Sydney, N.S.W., 11/9/51.