

## REPORT OF 67TH ANNUAL CONGRESS

### CANBERRA—OCTOBER 1968

Congress was officially opened by Her Excellency, Lady Casey, at 1000 h on 12 October 1968 in the Becker Hall of the Australian Academy of Science. More than 75 members attended; a list of those members who registered is given in the appendix.

After the official opening, tea was served in an anteroom where an exhibition of Australasian bird paintings had been arranged. This included the work of more than a dozen contemporary Australian bird artists and some overseas artists, with pictures by eminent early artists loaned by the National Library, which is gratefully acknowledged, and by some photographs.

The President then gave the first part of his address, 'Art in ornithology'. This was a scholarly, erudite and critical analysis of the subject, which was recognized as one of the important events of the Congress. Nearly all important work from the earliest times to the present day was reviewed, and examples chosen from such different places as Japan and Argentina and by such different artists as Gould and Picasso to illustrate the combination of, or discrepancy between, art and mere illustration. It was a pleasure to be given the opportunity of comparing the impressionism of Picasso with the essential rightness of Thorburn.

The Annual General Meeting was held in the afternoon in the Becker Hall. It was long and included controversial discussion on various topics. Only a summary can be published here, but a tape recording of almost the whole meeting is held by the Secretary.

The minutes of the 66th AGM, the Branch reports and the Secretary's report were adopted. The Treasurer gave his report and proposed that Part 4, Vol. 68, of *The Emu* should not be published, that the balance of funds at that time should be preserved for administrative expenses of the Union during the ensuing year, and that all donations should be set aside in a special endowment fund in order to provide a regular income. This was followed by discussion with written contributions from some members unable to be present. Finally Mr J. Jones proposed the following motion:

- i. That the Foundation established by Council is approved by Congress, and the capital funds so held are not to be used for publication of *The Emu* or for administrative purposes;
- ii. that Part 4, Vol. 68, *The Emu* be not published;
- iii. that the next issue be designated Part 1, Vol. 69;
- iv. that until such time as reserves, other than Foundation reserves, are sufficient to publish *The Emu* in the determined number of pages, each issue be confined to the number of pages with the type of content, as determined by an editorial committee, that can be paid for without undue delay.

This was seconded by Mr S. G. Lane and carried unanimously.

The officers were then elected, as nominated. There had been no nomination for Editor, but Mr S. Marchant was proposed by Dr G. F. van Tets and seconded by Mr J. Forshaw from the floor and was duly elected, there being no other nomination. Some discussion followed on the policy of *The Emu* and the responsibilities of the editor.

The meeting ended at 1700 hours.

In the evening a barbecue was held at Gungahlin by kind permission of Dr Frith, followed by a film of the Coolart sanctuary near Melbourne, introduced by Mr W. A. Davis.

During the next three days the programme was as follows:

#### Sunday, 13 October

Lecture Theatre, CSIRO Div. Land Res., Black Mt.

Morning Seminar on 'Australian Ornithology, past, present and future', with Mr R. K. Carruthers in the chair, at which the following papers were given:

'An historical background of ornithology with special reference to Australia' by Dr D. L. Serventy, read by Mr M. G. Ridpath.  
 'Ornithology in Australia today' by Mrs P. N. Reilly.  
 'Future opportunities for ornithology in Australia' by Dr G. F. van Tets.  
 Afternoon. The following scientific papers were given at a meeting chaired by Mr D. Purchase.  
 'Ornithology in central Australia, past and present' by Mr S. A. Parker.  
 'The genus *Cracticus*, Part I: Currawongs' by Mr J. Dell.  
 'The separation and identification of Australian crows and ravens' by Mr I. C. R. Rowley.

During the afternoon an excursion to the east end of Lake Burley Griffin was arranged for those not wishing to attend the scientific session.

In the evening a discussion was conducted by Dr D. F. Dorward on 'Rare and threatened Australian birds'.

### Monday, 14 October

#### *Lecture Theatre, Institute of Anatomy*

Morning. Mr S. G. Lane chaired a seminar on 'Ornithological Field Methods', at which the following papers were given:

'A review of modern techniques in ornithology' by Dr D. F. Dorward.

'Application of nest recording in Australia' by Mr S. Marchant.

'Seasonal movements of honeyeaters as shown by the Individual Observation Points Scheme' by Mr D. G. Thomas.

Afternoon. The following scientific papers were given at a meeting chaired by Mr M. G. Ridpath:

'Co-ordination of breeding cycles within the members of a pair prior to egg-laying' by Dr S. J. J. F. Davies.

'Some visual signal patterns of the Spur-winged Plover' by Dr G. F. van Tets.

'The evolution of song in the Menurae' by Mr F. N. Robinson.

A visit to the Canberra Botanical Gardens was arranged during the afternoon for those not wishing to attend the scientific session. In the evening three films dealing with New Zealand birds were shown.

### Tuesday, 15 October

#### *Lecture Theatre, Institute of Anatomy*

Morning. Seminar on 'Australian Ornithological Publications', chaired by Dr P. J. Fullagar, at which the following papers were given:

'Publications' by Mr I. C. R. Rowley.

'A review of Australia's present ornithological publications' by Mr W. B. Hitchcock.

'What we should have' by Mr H. J. de S. Disney.

Afternoon. The following scientific papers were given at a meeting chaired by Mr W. B. Hitchcock:

'Birds of the Furneaux Islands' by Mr R. H. Green.

'Studies on moult and skull ossification' by Mr H. J. de S. Disney.

'Australasian avian osteology'—Part 2 of Presidential address—by Mr A. R. McEvey.

During the afternoon an inspection of CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research HQ at Gungahlin was arranged for those not wishing to attend the scientific session.

Some members left Canberra on 15 October to attend the camp-out at Round Hill; others went there on 16 October. The camp-out was organized and led by Dr P. J. Fullagar and Mr. G. S. Chapman, and lasted till 27 October. Some members attended it who had not been at Congress. An account of the results is being prepared for publication elsewhere.

### APPENDIX

#### *Members Registered for Congress*

ACT.—H. L. Bell, G. S. Chapman, G. S. Clark, M. Clayton, A. H. d'Andria, Mrs D. Emery, J. M. Forshaw, H. J. Frith, P. J. Fullagar, Miss C. Harding, W. B. Hitchcock, S. Marchant, W. A. Martin, J. L. McKean, L. A. Moore, A. R. G. Morrison, Mrs E. Muspratt, H. A. Nix, D. E.

Peters, D. Purchase, I. C. R. Rowley, E. Slater, G. F. van Tets, S. J. Wilson.

NSW.—R. K. Carruthers, Mrs C. C. Crowe, G. Dibley, H. J. de S. Disney, R. B. Doyle, Mrs N. E. Gadsden, S. G. Lane, R. L. Mote, Miss O. Nock, Miss D. M. O'Grady, Miss G. Y. O'Grady, R. L. Pearce, M. T. Rowe, Miss D. Stenhouse, A. Stokes, Miss M. Talbot.

NT.—Mrs C. M. Cox, S. A. Parker.

Q.—W. Horton, N. Jack.

TAS.—Mrs B. N. Angel, R. H. Green, Miss C. H. Mosey, D. G. Thomas.

WA.—S. J. J. F. Davies, J. Dell, M. G. Ridpath, F. N. Robinson, D. A. Saunders, A. G. Stevenson.

VIC.—P. Balmford, Mrs R. A. Balmford, B. A. Blair, Mrs B. Blair, W. A. Davis, Mrs W. Denney, D. F. Dorward, T. I. Gellibrand, F. E. Jones, J. Jones, Mrs W. G. Jones, Mrs T. Kloot, Mrs E. M. McCulloch, A. R. McEvey, Miss D. Moroney, F. T. Morris, Mrs P. N. Reilly, Mrs G. H. Vasey, Miss I. Watson, N. Wattenhall.

PAPUA.—L. W. C. Filewood.

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

### Part I—'Art in Ornithology' (see p. 251)

### Part II—'Australasian Avian Osteology'

Under this heading I attempt to discuss briefly some historical aspects of osteology as a field of study in ornithology, to indicate its current trends, and to suggest Australian and New Zealand opportunities.

Most ornithologists know that there has been a renaissance in the study of osteology and anatomy during the last ten years. To understand this better let us look at the osteology of the past. Though there are many references that could be used, I draw attention particularly to three: *The Proper Goal of Comparative Anatomy* by D. Dwight Davis, and *The Use of Adaptive Characters in Avian Classification and Evolution and Phylogeny in Morphologically Uniform Groups* by Walter Bock which sum up the situation ably. In speaking of the past I borrow freely from these authors.

The idea of an archetype plan, an original model upon which the structure of vertebrates was based, was a central theme in pre-Darwinian morphology, especially during the 18th century. It arose from the same mould of thought as that which produced the concept of the type-specimen in systematics, the concept which saw the species as statically created and the type-specimen as typical of it. Of comparative anatomy Bock remarks 'During the period, roughly 1650-1850, in which the foundations for comparative anatomy and for taxonomy were being established, homology was based upon the ideas of transcendentalism which stems mainly from Kantianism. The unity of nature was the guiding principle; groups of organisms were believed to be constructed (= created) on the pattern given by the ideal type for that group. Belief in typology—that all members of a natural group of objects are patterned after the ideal type and that the observed variations between members of the group are non-essential—is a very old one and goes back to the teachings of Plato'.

In passing, mention should be made of the outstanding work of the Dutch anatomist and osteologist Volcher Coiter (1534-1576) which showed a close understanding of the bird skeleton, and reference made also to the early work of Pierre Belon (1517?-1564).

Davis draws attention to the dominant part played in general comparative anatomy during the second half of the 19th century by the German anatomist Gegenbaur who through detailed studies established evidence of a common plan existing in vertebrates, although he professed to be studying phylogeny, the history of the structural elements of the body. As Davis points out, the Gegenbaurian school, whose accomplishments were considerable, were still based, in their concept, 'in the old idealistic natural philosophy'. 'Their concept of the common structural plan differs little from the "common ideal plan" of the natural philosophers.' In other words, following the acceptance of the theory of evolution, the search for