

THE EMU

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PART 1

EDITORIAL

The first appearance of a new 'Emu', after almost seventy years without substantial change from the original format, can hardly be allowed to pass unnoticed. One hopes that like good wine the new 'Emu' needs no bush, but no doubt opinion will be sharply divided on the merit of the change. Admittedly there is much to be said for the belief that all change is for the worse, but as pointed out last year it has been forced on us by economic necessity. All the same, the critical and discerning reader will perhaps already be wondering whether he has been hoaxed, because he will remember that he was promised rather more for his money as a result of the change. Whether the promise has been fulfilled is certainly not a matter of conjecture like the song the sirens sang, and perhaps someone will be curious enough to determine the matter, but if the promise has not been fulfilled that is because of a combination of circumstances not entirely under our control.

By now it may seem that we are trying to make an apologia out of what is merely meant to be an explanation, informing members of how matters stand. At the end of last year we had at last caught up with the calendar, but we believe that we will not be truly up to date until the parts of the 'Emu' are issued at the start of each quarter. This is virtually impossible for Part 1 because the printers close down from Christmas until early in January. In order that we may issue Part 1 reasonably early in the year, it is necessary to submit the copy well before Christmas.

Although this was done last year, our worst apprehensions were fulfilled when it came to setting the part. Pure ignorance caused Dr Johnson to mis-define the word 'pastern'; it caused us originally to choose a type-setting which gave rise to insurmountable technical difficulties. The whole style of printing had to be reconsidered and the result of that reconsideration is now presented. It may be thought that after the nature of pendulums we have swung too far in the other direction after such a set-back. We think that we have achieved the ultimate economy at present attainable by adopting double-column printing.

However, there is nothing like making further

promises when previous ones have failed, and for us a turn of fortune presents a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. It happens that a Government bounty has recently been introduced for journals, like ours, which are printed in Australia and do not carry advertisements. We have good hope of receiving this bounty which will mean more to us than anything we could expect from advertisements. Briefly, if this hope is fulfilled, we ought to be able to issue regularly parts of about 70 pages each in this new format, even in the present state of our finances, provided, of course, that there is an adequate supply of suitable material.

The cover presents a special problem on which opinion is always likely to differ. Rather than commit ourselves to one design from the start we have thought it better to issue this volume with a different layout of the front cover for each part. Members can then decide for themselves which they prefer. Thus we hope that a satisfactory front cover will be chosen democratically if members will advise us of their preference at the end of the year.

Finally and apart from all changes of style with which readers are confronted, a change of policy regarding the classification used in the journal must be announced. It has long been recognized that editors and authors of works on Australian ornithology have been handicapped, and field workers often bewildered, by lack of a modern checklist of the birds of the continent. The RAOU 1926 Checklist is no longer useful taxonomically. In order that we might start to get away from its influence, it was decided at the beginning of Volume 69 to adopt for papers in the 'Emu' the order of Families given in *A New Dictionary of Birds* because probably it is the reference most easily available to authors before a new checklist can appear.

So far there has been little need to invoke the new order; in Volume 69 there were no papers that needed systematic arrangement except one for which Rand and Gilliard's *Handbook of New Guinea Birds* was the obvious choice. Now, however, geographical papers on Australian birds that call for systematic arrangement are being published. While editing them, it has become clear that a simple alteration of the

order of Families does not remove all the difficulties and even absurdities. It has therefore been decided not only to adopt the modern order of Families, but also to introduce, as far as possible, modern nomenclature down to specific and, if necessary, subspecific level.

Fortunately we are not without a guide in these matters. *A Handlist of the Birds of South Australia* by H. T. Condon appeared about a year ago and this sets the standard for the order of Families, as well as indicating in many places the specific and subspecific nomenclature that is now generally accepted. Moreover, in his introduction Mr Condon discusses the whole question of classification, sequence and taxonomic categories, which fortunately makes repetition unnecessary here. As Mr Condon says, his order is not an attempt to forecast or forestall the new checklist which he is preparing. It will help authors, readers and field workers to become used to an essential and long-overdue change because the order and nomenclature now to be used in this journal will conform to modern ideas on geographical variation

in species, generic limits and various other aspects of classification.

Until the new checklist is issued, then, the order of Families to be used in the 'Emu' will be that given in *A Handlist of the Birds of South Australia*, by H. T. Condon, 3rd edition, published by the South Australian Ornithological Association in 1969, Adelaide. We realize that Mr Condon's handlist is not adequate as a reference throughout the continent because authors of papers on areas far from South Australia cannot quote it for specific and subspecific nomenclature of forms absent from South Australia. However, there are various lists available for other parts of Australia such as *A Handbook of the Birds of Western Australia*, by Serventy and Whittell that use modern specific and subspecific nomenclature. We think that authors can probably overcome, for the time being, the lack of a comprehensive checklist by using and referring to the nomenclature of such lists arranged in the order of Families given by Mr Condon. Only as a last resort would we expect authors to fall back on the RAOU 1926 Checklist.