

and other members of the staff have identified contents of food pellets regurgitated by adult and young Gulls (containing mostly various types of fly larvae, insects, beetles, crustacea, fish and frogs), and identified other specimens found in the area. The helpful co-operation by the management and staff of the Cheetham Salt Company has been outstanding at all times.

Without transport, the work could not have been carried out as it has been. Melbourne members of the R.A.O.U., Bird Observers Club, and other interested folk have been most kind and helped the Survey immensely by supplying cars and petrol throughout the year.

A grant from the M. A. Ingram Trust Fund was an unexpected benefit and a great encouragement to the group. With part of the money, wading gear and instruments required by field workers have been purchased.

The group leaders and their assistants have stuck to this work with a zest which speaks well for the future, and when the results of this Survey are published in *The Emu* it will do justice, it is expected, to the work they have put into it.

\* \* \* \*

The group still needs assistance—the more observers that are in it the better it can function. If you can assist in field work or with transport, please make contact with Miss Watson at FA 8555.

Keep a watch for any banded Silver Gull and let the Survey know the full particulars.

The Convener would also like to know of any records of Silver Gull colonies throughout Australia, past or present, other than those already referred to in the pages of *The Emu*.

## Stray Feathers

Publication of the first four 'Strays' has inadvertently been held up for some time.

**Notes on the Reed-Warbler.**—Dr. Ernst Mayr in an article on geographic variation in the Reed-Warbler (*Emu*, vol. 47, part 3, page 208) says—"The majority of birds from South Australia and Victoria are reported to leave their breeding range during the winter (although some of the supposed emigration may be due to the cessation of singing), but the winter quarters of this population has not yet been reported."

The Australian Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*) is definitely migratory in southern Victoria. Birds arrive usually in early spring (September), their cheery song making the reed-beds ring. The main breeding period is

November and December and they are usually in good voice until the end of January. During February the song is only in short bursts and in March the birds leave the breeding area and are not heard or seen again until, as I have already stated, early spring.

At Easter (April 7-10) this year (1950), a number of members of the R.A.O.U. attended the Bird Observers' 'camp' at Gunbower in mid-northern Victoria. There, in the reed-beds along the Gunbower Creek and at Kow Swamp, the notes of the Reed-Warbler rang out as though the nesting season was in full swing. To those of us coming from the Melbourne district, whence at that time of the year the birds had already migrated, this seemed unusual. Enquiries as to whether this was the usual behaviour of the Reed-Warbler, met with no definite answer from Gunbower residents. The bird seemed to be part of the landscape and evidently was always there.

Following on this record comes another from David Morgan of Parkville, Victoria, who sent me the following notes.—“On an afternoon towards the end of May I was at the Caniambo Weir on the Broken River near Dookie.\* There is quite a lot of water banked up for over a mile behind the weir. Along the centre of this water runs a very dense patch of thick reeds. The sun was shining and it was a fine mild day. Reed-Warblers were in full song in these reeds all the time I was there, about two hours altogether. Evidently they do not all migrate from this State in winter.” Mr. Morgan also stated that he had recorded a Reed-Warbler at Royal Park during March. He assumed it was a migrating bird.

In view of these northern Victorian records it is suggested that possibly the southern Victorian Reed-Warblers only migrate to the northern part of the State. More definite observations will be needed to prove this assumption as correct.—ROY WHEELER, Windsor, Vic., 14/8/50.

\*Dookie is approximately 110 miles N.N.E. in a direct line from Melbourne, and Gunbower about 130 miles N.N.W.

**Bird Song.**—A notable contribution to the study of bird song has been made by Dr. Poulsen of Denmark at the 10th International Ornithological Congress held recently at Upsala in Sweden. Poulsen says that among members of a single Family (Fringillidae) the song (apart from call notes) of the Linnet is wholly acquired by listening to its fellows whilst the song of the Reed Bunting is wholly innate. A third member, the Chaffinch, will sing if kept isolated, but the song is imperfect and much less striking than that of Chaffinches that have been allowed to listen to others of their kind. Poulsen has made the important discovery that young Chaffinches can learn the full song

of the species only during the spring following their hatching at a period when their testes are maturing and liberating sex hormones. If exposed to adult song either before or after the maturation period, the birds are unable to reproduce it. Again, if young Chaffinches, during the period of androgen liberation, were exposed to the calls of other species (e.g. Canary) they learned to sing moderately like the alien species and thereafter were unable to learn the true song of their kind.

It is interesting to recall that some of the jungle mimics in Australia seem to have allowed acquired song to replace entirely, apart from call notes, any song that the species may have once had. Again, the link between the learning of song and hormone production, in view of previous work on the hormonal aspects of territorial aggression, is most significant.—A. J. MARSHALL, London, England, 8/8/50.

**The Ubiquitous Nankeen Kestrel.**—Looking over notes on a recent three months' tour of Western Australia I find every list with one name in common—Nankeen Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*). These district lists comprised such widely-separated places as Albany, Bridgetown, Bunbury, Perth, Rottnest Island, Geraldton, Long Island (Abrolhos), Murchison River mouth and Wiluna. This shows that the species is a very adaptable one as the classes of country in this list vary from heavy-timbered areas to coral islands and mallee types of scrub. The locality where the birds were most numerous was that area on the railway from Wiluna to approximately 250 miles westwards. In daylight hours no five minutes were passed without seeing at least one pair of birds and at one watering stop I counted seventeen birds in the air at one time. As this area is comprised of very dense low scrub I would surmise the food to consist of lizards and small birds. Enormous flocks of small birds, Budgerygahs being the only species identified, were constantly noticed. But even if I guess the food supply correctly, I do not know where these birds nest.

One month later I encountered the Kestrel nesting at the Murchison River. This was during the R.A.O.U. Camp-cut. One nest of three eggs was found in an old nest of a Crow or Raven fairly high in a eucalypt. Another nest of five eggs was found in a casuarina, also a Crow's nest, about twenty feet from the ground. The eggs in this clutch were of two distinct patterns; three being heavily blotched dark-brown and the other two faintly streaked light red. Fixing the camera in the hope of a 'shot' I had the unique opportunity of watching four birds attack it. At the end of a two hours' wait there was only one bird near—sitting about ten feet away watching the camera, which I had to remove.

My next encounter with the Kestrel was on Long Island on the Abrolhos. I there found a nest containing three eggs in the top bucket of a disused guano loader. The lessee of the island informed me these birds only arrived on the island during 1948. As there are no rodents on this island, I again assume these birds must feed on lizards, five different species of which are found there, or young birds, as there are very few small birds present.

The next encounter with these birds was on the Nullarbor Plain on the return rail journey to Victoria. On the Western Australian side ten birds were counted and six more on the South Australian side. These birds were all in pairs; I must assume that they nest on the ground as there is nothing in sight off the ground they could use for a nesting site. I also observed one Wedge-tailed Eagle and two Black-breasted Buzzards on the Plain.

Going over notes taken last year in North Queensland I note that on October 16, 1947, at Ayr, I observed a Nankeen Kestrel in the last stages of exhaustion being pursued by a Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*). The Kestrel would land in the thick part of a tree and immediately the Falcon would dive at it and drive it out again. On the next morning I found a mass of feathers belonging to a Kestrel about two hundred yards from this spot, so I surmise the Falcon eventually succeeded in catching and devouring this particular bird.—H. E. TARR, Middle Park, Vic., 8/11/48.

**Breeding Data of the Starling.**—A letter in *The Emu* for January, 1951, vol. 50, p. 212, asked for information about Starlings. Large flocks (200 to 500 birds) are frequently seen feeding in the paddocks here. Several pairs nest, communally, in the spouts and broken tops of still-standing dead trees, from 50 feet to 150 feet from the ground. One pair nests regularly in a low stump (three or four years in the same place). So far I have noted only one clutch each year in this nest, with five or six young. An acquaintance, for whose word I can vouch, gave me the following account of the egg-laying ability of a Starling. A pair nested in a box on a stump on which there was a tank. The box was used to enable the owner to climb up to examine the tank. Not being a Starling lover (he had cherry trees nearby) he removed the clutch of five eggs. Next day there was a fresh egg in the nest. This was removed, and each succeeding day an egg was laid (and removed) until the total reached twenty eggs. After that the bird gave up, or, possibly, found another nesting site.—J. R. SKEMP, Myrtle Bank, Tas., 7/3/51.

**Swift Parrot in South Australia.**—The appearances of the Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) in South Australia are so decidedly seasonal, as a general rule, that there can

be little doubt as to the purely migratory character of the species in that State. Most reports of Swift Parrots are for the autumn and winter months. Edwin Ashby (*S.A. Orn.*, vi, 82, 108, 1923) noted the birds as early in the year as January, February and March, in 1923, at Blackwood, and Dr. A. H. Lendon (*id.* xv, 29, 1939) saw the species on January 31, in 1939, at Enfield.

There do not appear to be any definite records of the species for the period from September 15 to January 15, so probably all the birds are absent from the State during the breeding months. In any case, the writer has been unable to find any record of the Swift Parrot having ever bred in this State.

The known geographical range in South Australia extends from the south-east to the southern portion of the Mount Lofty Ranges and adjacent parts of the Adelaide Plains. It seems likely that the main migration route passes through south-western Victoria, crossing the Glenelg River.

An isolated occurrence of two birds, presumably a pair, among flowering white mallee (*Eucalyptus gracilis*) trees,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-west of Sutherlands, was noted by me during May 1927. These two birds were approached sufficiently close to see the diagnostic features of the species, particularly the bright red underwing coverts and the reddish bases of the tail feathers. The above locality is about 25 miles due west of the nearest point on the Murray River, just below Morgan.

Possibly some of the Swift Parrots occasionally follow the Murray River Valley westward from central-northern Victoria, thus arriving in South Australia by a northern route.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 20/11/51.

**Mutton-bird Graveyard?**—On January 8, 1952, I found, at Cape Grant in the Portland district (Victoria), the remains of over 400 Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus tenuirostris*). They all appeared to be in the same stage of decay and I would guess that they had died in early December 1951. They were lying in all attitudes and whilst by far the majority were in an area about 50 yards by 30 yards, there were some birds lying as much as 300 yards away. These were mostly lacking the head, suggesting that they had been carried by foxes, which are numerous in the vicinity. They were on the extreme tip of the Cape about 150 feet sheer above the sea and were lying in coarse tussocks and stunted tea-tree. There is no suggestion of any birds attempting to nest there.

A similar situation existed on Point Danger, which is a few miles to the north-east, but here the number of deaths was not above 100. Brigadier Hugh Officer saw a number of these birds dead in similar circumstances on Point Danger in January 1951, but did not visit the tip of Cape Grant.

These two capes will bear watching in future years as the weather records do not show any great storm which might have caused this mass destruction so high above the birds' normal level, and there is no lighthouse on either cape to confuse them.—CLAUDE N. AUSTIN, Coleraine, Vic., 12/2/52.

**Bar-tailed Godwit at Macquarie Island.**—On December 20, 1951, a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica novæ-zealandiæ*) was taken at Hasselborough Bay, Macquarie Island. As expected, this specimen belonged to the Pacific race of the Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica novæ-zealandiæ* Gray. When first noticed the Godwit was standing near the water's edge amongst a group of Dominican Gulls (*Larus dominicanus*). In such a situation it could easily have been passed over as an immature Dominican Gull, particularly in plumage. The length of its legs and bill were the features which made it conspicuous.

The specimen was a male in winter plumage. Its feathers were very worn, except for the primaries which were freshly moulted. The iris was brown and the feet black while the proximal half of the beak was pink and the distal half black.

Measurements were: Exposed culmen 95 mm., wing (flattened) 220, tail 80, tarsus 57, middle toe and claw 38. Weight was 370 gms. The distribution of this species is northern Europe and northern Asia, migrating to tropical Africa, northern India, Malaya and the Australasian regions. Though it reaches the far south of New Zealand each year in large numbers, this is only the second record of the species at Macquarie Island, the first having been made in 1912 by H. Hamilton. Acknowledgement is made to Mr. W. Hitchcock of the National Museum, Melbourne, for final identification and measurement of the specimen.—EARL LINDHOLM, Melbourne, Vic., 30/5/52.

**Birdmen and Aircraft.**—It is pleasing to record that the name of John Gould, as well as that of his able coadjutor, John Gilbert, has been adopted by Trans-Australia Airlines for a major aircraft.

The development began when, in 1948, I chanced to fall into discussion with Captain L. J. Brain, general manager of T.A.A., regarding aircraft nomenclature, subsequent to which a letter was sent to the company, from the Council of the R.A.O.U., recommending that the name 'John Gilbert' be given to a new skymaster. Since Gilbert was an explorer as well as a birdman (and T.A.A.'s policy was to use only explorers' names on major aircraft) it was suggested that the use of his name would be doubly appropriate. Captain Brain agreed, and soon afterwards the skymaster *John*

*Gilbert* appeared as a companion to the skymasters *John Eyre* and *McDouall Stuart*.

Early in 1951 T.A.A. wrote me in reference to a fourth skymaster, then being assembled in England, and this time it was suggested that the name of John Gould should be adopted. Because Gould was not an explorer, T.A.A. had some dubiety about using the name, but eventually, after the value of Gould's pioneering work and his association with Gilbert had been emphasized, the suggestion was accepted and 'John Gould' was cabled to England as the name of the new aircraft.

Notification of the development was then sent to Gould's grand-daughter, Mrs. Helen Edelsten, and she and her sons attended at Dunsfold Aerodrome, Surrey, for an inspection of the skymaster. The *John Gould* reached Australia near the end of 1951. It was farewelled at London airport by Mrs. Edelsten, who presented to the chief pilot, Captain Clive Forman, a photograph of 'Grandfather Gould' as a memento of the occasion.

Both John Gould and John Gilbert experienced rough times when, from 1838 onward, they sought birds in the wilds of Australia. How astonished they would have been, if they could have foreseen that, more than a century later, their names would be applied to great man-made birds that annihilated distance in the land over which they trudged or rode!—A. H. CHISHOLM, Sydney, N.S.W., 20/4/52.

**Notes from the Maitland District.**—Recently I saw a White-breasted Sea-Eagle rise, with difficulty, from a culvert alongside the main New England Highway just on the Newcastle side of Maitland. The bird was being pursued by several Magpies and as I stopped the car I saw that it had a three-foot long eel in its talons. It was apparently having great difficulty in holding on to the squirming victim. Although I have seen Sea-Eagles flying over Maitland before, it is the first time I have ever seen one take off from a main road. There was a small waterhole under the culvert and a small swamp alongside.

About Christmas time I saw a Channel-billed Cuckoo fly over my home at Lorn, in Maitland, calling loudly. Several days later the bird was still in the district. This is the only record I have of this bird in the Maitland district, and I think the recent bush fires may have had some bearing on its appearance, although it would have seemed more reasonable to expect it to travel north rather than south.

Another new arrival was in the shape of two Red-tailed Tropic-birds off Port Stephens at the end of February. I have seen the Frigate-bird before in this area, but think this is the first record of the Red-tailed Tropic-bird. While passing Broughton Island I noticed a flock of King Parrots on

the low dense scrub on the north-western end of the island. Although the island is only a mile from the mainland it is unusual to see parrots there. The Gould Petrels all have well advanced young, just losing their lovely downy covering. One adult Petrel was found some miles out to sea floundering in the water and unable to rise. It must have been three miles from Cabbage Tree and had evidently flapped its way all that distance with nearly thirty seeds of the bird-lime tree (*Pisonia*) adhering to its wings and body. I caught it and took all the seeds off and after giving the bird an hour's rest on the launch released it again. It was unable to fly, but it would have had a chance of drying its feathers and probably of recovery.

This year there has been a marked absence of Gannets, only four birds having been seen—together, last week, and constituting the first record of the season. These birds are usually quite common during the summer, though possibly more so later on, and we always look for them to guide us to schools of fish. Fishermen in Newcastle and Swansea have also commented on the lack of Gannets this season.

On my way back to Maitland from Port Stephens I put up a Little Black Cormorant which was sitting on the middle of the tarmac on the main road near Bob's Farm. There was no water nearer than a mile or so and the road was surrounded by dense gum trees. It had difficulty in rising and flew low in front of the car for a hundred yards or so, before rising and turning into the timber country.

Lastly, while on a trip by road to Sydney I was surprised to see what looked to me to be a Lewin Rail scuttle across the road a few miles on the Newcastle side of Wyong. There was no water evident but plenty of swampy land is not far away from where the bird was seen.

I have omitted what is possibly the most interesting note—namely the appearance of four Glossy Black Cockatoos which flew along by the beach at Shoal Bay at the entrance to Port Stephens. This was just on dusk one evening. I have not seen these birds in this locality before.—A. F. D'OMBRAIN, Newcastle, N.S.W., 5/3/52.

**Common Sandpiper at Sorrento, Vic.**—Is the white line around the shoulder of this species a recognized distinguishing feature? On February 14, 1952, I was on one of the Sorrento 'front' beaches, that is on Port Phillip Bay, when I noticed a small wader running along a bathing jetty. My immediate reaction was that the bird was not known to me, its most distinguishing feature being a very distinct white line running around the outer edge of the bend of each wing, which was something I did not recognize. How-



ever, its general markings, subsequently checked with skins, mode of flight, and dipping motion when it ran, all pointed to its being a Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*), a species which I have seen at least once before at Sorrento, although I have no recollection of the white shoulder.

This bird, incidentally, appeared to be engaged in the very laudable occupation of catching March flies, which were in almost plague numbers. Its hunting procedure was to run along the jetty until a resting fly was noted, then to stalk it to within a foot of its quarry, and finally to dart forward and, generally, to effect a capture.—JOHN REED, Heidelberg, Vic., 8/3/52.

**Further Notes on the Little Friar-bird near Sydney.**—In *The Emu*, vol. 32, pp. 306-307, K. A. Hindwood gave some notes on the infrequent occurrence of the Little Friar-bird (*Philemon citreogularis*) in the Sydney district, New South Wales. Some years later he summarized the known records of the species near Sydney in 'Honeyeaters of the Sydney District (County of Cumberland), New South Wales' (*Australian Zoologist*, vol. 10, pt. 3, pp. 231-251, 7 pls., May 1944), which included a few sight observations and some specimens collected between 1902 and 1932. The Little Friar-bird is one of a number of species common in inland areas of the State, but only straggles to the central coastal districts. Some further sight records and some nesting observations have induced me to add a supplementary note.

On September 5, 1936, in a timbered gully west of Jannali, about 14 miles south of Sydney, a nest, about twenty feet in height, built into the slender outer limb of an *Angophora*, was found by Messrs. F. G. Johnston and A. Brinsley. The adult bird was sitting, but whether the nest contained eggs or young could not be ascertained. A few weeks later (September 28) a further nest was located east of Jannali, about thirty feet high in a blackbutt. This nest contained three eggs on that date. These represent the only known breeding records of the species for Sydney.

In April 1946 J. A. Keast found small numbers feeding in the flowering coral trees in the park, adjacent to his home at Rockdale, about seven miles south of Sydney. I visited the area on April 23, and counted upwards of ten birds busy feeding on the honey-laden flowers. K. A. Hindwood found only one—an adult-plumaged bird—in the same locality on April 28, and a further visit by me a week later revealed no birds. However, early in May the same year one bird was observed during a day spent at Mount Wilson, about 60 miles west of Sydney, in the Blue Mountains, and Mr. Keast later saw two birds in Rockdale Park on July 7.

Mr. Hindwood has kindly forwarded me an additional recent observation. A single bird was seen feeding in a flowering coral tree at Taronga Park on May 20, 1951. It was in immature plumage, i.e. with yellow chin and throat. The feathers on the upper breast appeared to have yellow centres, giving the effect of indistinct yellow stripes.—ARNOLD R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W., 3/1/52.

**Nesting Notes on Two Honeyeaters.**—Little breeding information on the Brown Honeyeater (*Gliciphila indistincta*) and Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*) in the Sydney district, New South Wales, has been recorded. Available information up to 1944 was summarized by K. A. Hindwood in an article, 'Honeyeaters of the Sydney District (County of Cumberland), New South Wales' (*Australian Zoologist*, vol. 10, pt. 3, pp. 231-251, 7 pls., 1944). Only two evidences of breeding were then available for the Brown Honeyeater, and an old nesting occurrence (1899) was the only one given for the Crescent Honeyeater, although the assumption was made that "odd pairs may remain to nest in parts of the County".

Since 1944 the Brown Honeyeater has been noted by various observers in a number of areas south of Sydney, where it seems to be a permanent resident wandering to closely settled suburban localities in the winter months, so some nesting notes during one season might be of assistance to anyone assessing more recent data. In 1950 large numbers were observed by us in the mangrove-fringed bays on the southern shore of Botany Bay. Seven occupied nests were found—two on August 30, three on September 10 and two on September 23. They varied from two to five feet in height and were all built in small grey mangroves. Two nests were lined with white mangrove 'fur', two with the hairy, red flowers of swamp-oaks, and three with a mixture of both. Except in one nest where one egg remained the full clutch, all contained the usual two eggs. These varied in colour from pure white to white, with a prominent ring of pale chestnut spots about the larger end.

The Crescent Honeyeater probably nests regularly in our district (10-15 miles south of Sydney). Since August 28, 1944, when a nest, built into a clump of sword-grass and containing two young, was found near Bundeena, in the gullies adjoining the National Park, four further breeding records have been obtained by us. In each instance the nest contained two eggs, the most recent one being found on July 31, 1951, and held two well-incubated eggs. It was situated twenty inches from the ground in the top of a clump of umbrella-fern, only three yards from the nesting site of July 31, 1949. All nests found were in the Bundeena area, except the one located on September 9, 1944 (our latest

record for a nest), which was built into some apple-vines, contained two eggs, and was in the vicinity of Engadine.—F. G. JOHNSTON AND A. BRINSLEY, Sutherland, N.S.W., 4/12/51.

**The European Starling in Fiji.**—On a visit to the isolated corner of the Fiji Group known as Ono-i-lau, in January last, I found well established there a bird which appeared to be the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Not being familiar with the bird in Australia, as I come from Western Australia, I took the opportunity of a second visit in September to secure a skin. This was sent to K. A. Hindwood, who identified it as indeed the Starling. So far as I know this alien has not been previously recorded as occurring in this group, though its presence in most of the outlying dependencies of New Zealand has long been known. The native people at Ono-i-lau told me that the bird was first seen there following a hurricane about twenty years ago. They were unable to be more specific than that as to the time.

If the first arrivals were windborne, they most probably originated in the Kermadec Islands to the south. Today this is, to all appearances, the most numerous bird in that little sub-group of islands, being common in the villages and in the bush alike. I was told that it has been known to eat the fruit of bananas and papaws, but my own observations suggested mainly an insectivorous diet. One bird was taken by hand as it emerged from a spout in a breadfruit tree in the centre of the village. There were indications within the hole that nest building had begun. This was in the first week in September. My home is at Lakeba, some 175 miles due north of Ono-i-lau, but there has been no sign of the Starling extending its range to this island, nor indeed, to any other of the several islands which lie between Ono-i-lau and Lakeba, most of which I have visited briefly.—WALTER R. HILL, Lakeba, Lau, Fiji, 4/12/51.

**Influx of White-necked Herons in southern Victoria.**—The spring and summer of 1951 will be remembered as a season in which the White-necked Heron (*Notophoxyx pacifica*) visited southern Victoria, where ordinarily they are not common, in great numbers. They have been observed everywhere, often the dark body hidden and only the white neck and head gleaming from the long grass or rushes. We saw eight showing thus from a paddock beside the road near Laverton on December 8.

At Hattah camp-out they were seen often flying over, and the white patch on the leading edge showed out clearly against the dark of the rest of the wing. At Christmas they were everywhere as we journeyed through the Western District. One small swamp in the corner of a paddock near Terang had 40 clustered around it.

One bird, in company with a White-fronted Heron (*N. novæ-hollandiæ*), was seen stalking sedately around the small ornamental lake in the Treasury Gardens, Melbourne, almost in the heart of the city. It was comparatively tame, and it was easy to see the vandyke dark markings down the front of the chest, which is well shown in the illustration in Cayley's *What Bird is That?*—INA WATSON, Jolimont, Vic., 22/1/52.

**Pacific Gull killing Grebe.**—On August 12, 1951, in company with Mr. D. Morgan, I was walking along the beach at 3.15 p.m. at Altona when our attention was drawn by a flurry in the water and the savage calling of two Pacific Gulls (*Gabianus pacificus*), which were attacking a Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*) in shallow water some fifty yards offshore. The commencement of the attack could not have occurred many seconds before, as the area was in full view as we walked along the beach.

The Grebe was not diving and appeared to make no effort to avoid the peckings, which were directed at its head; at first it even appeared to be fighting back, and at one stage, watching through the glasses, we noticed that the bills of the Grebe and Gull seemed to be locked. Two Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) swam up, but were quickly driven off by one of the Pacific Gulls, the other continuing the attack.

The Grebe quickly succumbed, and the Gull played with it for a minute or two, pushing the body ahead of it in the water, and occasionally lifting it, the small body hanging limply from its bill. At the end of about five minutes from the start of the affray, the Gull flew off. An attempt was made to wade out and recover the body of the Grebe, but the water was too deep.—INA WATSON, Jolimont, Vic., 22/1/52.

**Crested Pigeon.**—Although I have resided in the Manning River and Hastings River districts, eastern New South Wales, all my life, the first Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) noted by me within the area was at Taree in 1943. Another was seen near Kendall, 30 miles further north, in 1949. In May 1950 I observed a flock of eight birds near the Hastings River, 20 miles north of Kendall. Each locality is less than eight miles from the coast. I have sought information on the species through the local press and received reports from four readers, none of whom had seen the bird during the past 20 years.

The Crested Pigeon is common inland, but coastal occurrences in the State appear to be rare, except probably in the far north where small resident populations may occur, as in parts of south-eastern Queensland.—T. H. BRECKENRIDGE, Taree, N.S.W., 12/6/51.

**Notes from Mud Island, Vic.**—I camped from November 3 to 8, 1951, inclusive, on Mud Island, Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, and whilst there I located at least twenty juvenile Pied Oyster-catchers (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*). They varied in size from about day old to practically adult stage. About one half of them took to the water when approached. They are strong swimmers although lacking web feet. In all cases when I attempted to capture one of the swimming birds it dived and swam under water at a depth of about two feet before rising to the surface. The small wings were used as paddles during these diving exercises. I timed twelve of the dives from different sized birds, and the average duration of submersion was ten seconds. The longest dive was of twelve seconds' duration, made by a fairly young bird. Three nests of eggs of this species were also found on the island.

The other breeding birds on the island during my camp were Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), nest of young and two pairs of mottled birds on the wing being carefully guarded by adults; Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), large young; Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis*), clutches of eggs being completed; White-faced Storm-Petrel (*Pelagadroma marina*), just commenced egg-laying, but many burrows contained courting pairs; and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), nest of seaweed and feathers in low tea-tree.—HAROLD E. TARR, Middle Park, Vic., 23/11/51.

**Loss of Lower Mandible by Silver Gull.**—On February 14, 1952, on the sand dunes at Warrnambool, Victoria, we were feeding a flock of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ hollandiæ*). It was noticed that one bird rarely ran for crusts as did the others, but was particularly good at catching them.

On watching this bird more closely I discovered that almost its entire lower mandible was missing. In consequence, it was unable, even by turning its head partly on its side, to pick up crusts which had fallen to the sand. If one fell nearby it would make an attempt, but was never seen to succeed before another bird snatched the crust away and devoured it. Apparently it had been in this maimed condition sufficiently long to realize its ability and therefore did not expend energy running for crusts which fell on the sand any distance away. Also it had developed an ability to catch crusts far in excess of the other normal birds present. It would run and perform quite agile movements in order to catch crusts and was seen to catch three in succession when they were purposely thrown in its direction.

The mandible terminated very close to the triangular piece of flesh which connects the lower mandible to the throat. The bird appeared to be healthy and normal otherwise.—KEN. L. S. HARLEY, Albury, N.S.W., 29/2/52.

**Kookaburras and Louse-flies.**—The nesting-place of the Kookaburras mentioned in *The Emu* (<sup>1, 2</sup>) was used again in 1949, and also, for the seventh successive year, in 1950. The roof of the hollow either collapsed or was trampled in soon after the close of the 1950 nesting. In the following season a pair of Kookaburras nested in a similar situation about 50 yards from the old site. The hollow was in a layer of earth above the rock-face of an old quarry. Three eggs were laid early in November 1951, but two of them disappeared before hatching.

Conditions in the nest were much the same as noted in previous years. Larvae of the fly *Passeromyia longicornis* were present among the nest rubbish and food remains on the floor of the chamber: also a constant stream of ants, of the species *Pheidole variabilis*, moved in and out of the nest from a crevice a few feet away, as had been the case at the other nesting-place.

The single nestling was well-grown on December 16, when (amid loud cries from the bird) I examined it for louse-flies. One fly, which was very quick in its movements, was captured and sent to Mr. J. Bequaert, of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A., who had recently examined hippoboscids from Australia. The specimen agreed with flies collected by me from young Kookaburras in 1945, which were then considered to be *Ornithomyia avicularia* Linné. Bequaert has, however, since determined the species as *Ornithomyia perfuga* Speiser.

Louse-flies have not been studied in detail in Australia. The following relevant information from Mr. Bequaert's letter is, therefore, of interest.

The hippoboscid fly from a nestling Jackass is an *Ornithomyia perfuga* Speiser. This is a very distinct species from *Ornithomyia avicularia* Linne.

There is, however, in Australia another species of *Ornithomyia* which I am unable to separate from *O. avicularia*. This occurs on a variety of Australian birds, but is particularly frequent on parrots. I have seen it also from owls and diurnal birds of prey in Australia. I have seen *O. perfuga* only from Australia and Tasmania, where it has been found also on *Podargus*, and sometimes in parrots, owls, etc. (J. Bequaert, *in litt.*, 11/2/52).

—K. A. HINDWOOD, Sydney, 21/2/52.

#### REFERENCES

1. Hindwood, K. A. 'Nesting Habits of the Kookaburra or Laughing Jackass (*Dacelo gigas*)', *The Emu*, vol. 47, October 1947, pp. 117-30, pls. 7-8.
2. Hindwood, K. A. 'Kookaburras' Strange Nesting Place', *The Emu*, vol. 48, November 1948, pp. 166-7.  
Hindwood, K. A., 'A Note on Louse-flies', *The Emu*, vol. 47, March 1948, pp. 303-4, pl. 21.

**Cape Barren Goose Inland.**—On the mainland of South Australia the Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis novæ-hollandiæ*) occurs only along the coast-line and localities close to the coast, as a rule. In the early part of December 1951, a stray bird appeared on the Salt Creek, adjoining a pig paddock, close to the homestead of Mr. P. H. Schiller, three miles south of Sutherlands, S.A., and remained there for about a fortnight. I saw the bird on December 12, and satisfied myself as to its identity.

The distance to the nearest part of the coast on St. Vincent Gulf is about 50 miles, but this involves crossing the Mount Lofty Range. It is altogether more probable that the goose followed up the Murray River from the favourite haunts on Lake Alexandrina, and then wandered westward to Salt Creek, a total distance of more than 100 miles.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 28/4/52.

**Goldfinches around Brisbane.**—Blake in *The Emu*, vol. 51, p. 172, raises the question of the presence of the Goldfinch in the Brisbane area. It was also raised by Tarr and by Chisholm in previous articles (vol. 49, p. 196, vol. 50, p. 99) respectively. Chisholm apparently had no knowledge of its presence there.

There is no mystery about the Brisbane Goldfinches. Most of the local bird observers are well aware of their presence, it being a matter of knowing just where to look. My own records of the species go back over twenty years, when I identified it in the Hamilton area. Being young and inexperienced, I fondly imagined that I had made a 'discovery'. However, when I was informed by some of the local bird trappers that its presence had long been an established fact, I discreetly let the matter drop. Bird trappers who pursue birds for ulterior rather than aesthetic reasons are often found to be more observant than some reputed 'ornithologists'. They have to be. In fairness to the older Brisbane bird men it might be mentioned that they were well occupied with the native bird population, and probably did not think that the presence of a few Goldfinches in Brisbane was a matter of great importance, or an opportunity to rush into print.

There are some peculiar ideas about introduced birds, one of which is that a species must 'spread' to a district from some original point of introduction, when actually it only means the liberation of a few pairs in a favourable situation, and a district is soon colonized. The Goldfinch had long been observed in an area around Hamilton and Ascot, ranging to Pinkenba and the surrounding districts. This has given rise to a theory, which up to the present has been neither proved nor disproved, that it originated in that district and gradually extended its range. Eventually the Brisbane Goldfinches may link up with the southern population, and, not knowing the circumstances,

one may be pardoned for imagining that the Brisbane Goldfinches had 'spread' from the south.

Personally, I have identified the species in various suburbs as far apart as Stafford and Moorooka. Due to its peculiar habits, its dependence upon thistle, sunflower, and other composite plants, it is not a 'common' bird, and has not made the spectacular progress that is so characteristic of some introduced species. However, 1950 being a wet year and a good year for birds generally, I noticed an increase, and quite a few flocks of up to twenty were in evidence. In some suburbs, including my own, Paddington, it is an occasional garden visitor to such plants as sunflowers when they are in seed. Evidently it moves about a good deal.—N. JACK, Paddington, Brisbane, Qld., 3/11/51.

## News and Notes

### OUT OF PRINT *Emu*

Whilst the Council likes to think that members retain *The Emu* and do not willingly part with copies, nevertheless the Council wishes to obtain several copies of vol. 52, part 1, which is already out of print. If any member not desirous of retaining his copy is willing to dispose of the same, will he please send it to the Hon. General Secretary.

### CAMP-OUT 1951

The account of the birds noted at the 1951 Camp at Hattah, Victoria, is still not to hand from the author at the time of this part's 'going to press'.

### BOOK BINDING

One of the youngest members of the Union, Mr. Harry Dunn, of Warragul, Vic., recently offered to pay for the binding of the Union's copy of G. M. Henry's *Colour Plates of the Birds of Ceylon*, an offer accepted by the Council with appreciation. The Union has a number of unbound ornithological works, and assistance towards binding would be most acceptable. Why not 'sponsor' the binding of a book or a series?

## Review

**Birds of the Recherche Archipelago.**—This account by V. N. Serventy, part 2 (part 1 not yet published) of the reports of the Australian Geographical Society's Expedition to the islands in 1950, goes beyond a list of birds then observed, for previous records are included.

The introductory remarks contain some items of general interest. The dearth of cormorants and terns and the absence of the Gannet as a breeding species suggest unproductive local waters. Aerial surveys have established that the larger sea-birds do not nest in the group.

The list of Recherche birds published by Basset Hull in *The Emu*, vol. 21, contained 24 species. Serventy includes 57 species of which