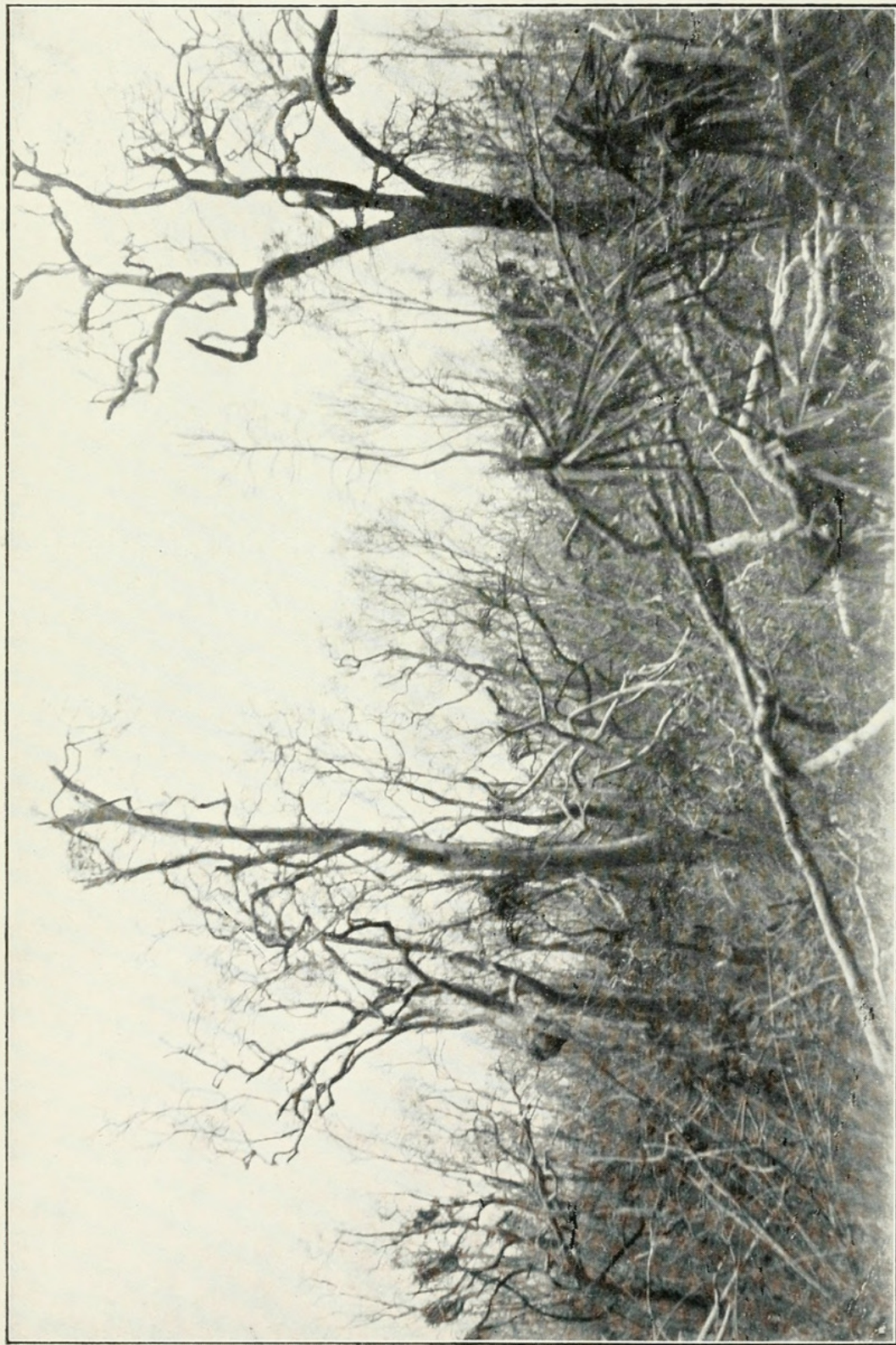


Cyclones and Bird Destruction.

THIS year cyclones in North Queensland were unusually violent, the one at Mackay—at its height the night of 20th-21st January—being a record for fierceness and widespread damage, in which much avifauna was wiped out. Mr. E. M. Cornwall, although himself heavily hit by the great storm, kindly sends the accompanying photograph of a portion of his bush paddock and bird sanctuary, with the following note:—"The destruction of bird-life has been deplorable. Thousands of sea-birds were driven ashore; amongst them were Frigate-Birds, Gannets, and Caspian, Brown-winged, Crested, Lesser Crested, Black-naped, Roseate, and Noddy Terns. Thousands of these were lying dead along the beaches. I found some in my paddock amongst the drift which the tidal wave swept up to my garden back fence. Our forest birds are almost wiped out. We have not seen a single Honey-eater of any kind since the storm, and those birds we have seen could be counted on the fingers of one hand. At Mrs. Innes's place the Parrots flocked into the house, and, though the roof went off, they remained there until the storm was over." The illustration shows how completely the foliage has been stripped, by the force of the wind, off the trees, which were acacias (two kinds), melaleuca, eucalyptus, careya, &c. Regarding another cyclone at Cardwell the night of 10th-11th March, a correspondent, Mr. Tom Butler, J.P., after mentioning destruction of his own property, loss of local stock, two aborigines killed, and the appearance of the scrub after the blow—"like those illustrations you see in the papers of a forest in France that has been shelled"—writes:—"I think the birds in the scrub (really a green jungle) are nearly all wiped out. Most of them would be killed, and the fruit-eaters would have to leave or starve, there being nothing for them. A few birds strange to me came round the premises looking for food. White-eyes (*Zosterops*) came in great numbers after the fallen oranges (nearly all the orange crops came to the ground). The poor little chaps were starving, and so weak they could not fly. Others made a raid on 'Joeys' (Blue-bellied Lorikeet) milk pots—in fact, were all over the place hunting for food. Our tame Pigeon (Magnificent Fruit-Pigeon) was away that night; do not know where he got to, but he returned home next morning a complete wreck, and was apparently so disgusted that he rarely leaves home now. You remember how tuneful the numerous birds used to be in the adjacent scrubs at early morn. Since the blow there has been a dead silence—not a sound of any sort. Even the Megapodes do not sing out." The destruction of beautiful bird life by these fierce visitations of Nature must be enormous—temporary extinction in some parts. Therefore, as a mere drop of water in a bucketful must be the few specimens taken by the hand of man from time to time for museum and scientific purposes, to which there is sometimes objection taken by over-zealous persons.—

A. J. CAMPBELL. Surrey Hills (Vic.)



A Queensland Forest after the Great Cyclone. The trees are stripped of foliage.

PHOTO. BY E. M. CORNWALL, R.A.O.U., MACKAY.



Albino Magpie (*Gymnorhina leuconota*).

PHOTO. BY D. LE SOUEF, C.M.Z.S.



Flight of Galahs (Rose-breasted Cockatoo).

PHOTO. BY F. C. MORSE, R.A.O.U.

In the recent cyclone which took place at Mackay, on the coast of North Queensland, the damage done to the small bird-life can hardly be realized. Probably many thousands of birds have been killed. The following note from our member, Mr. E. M. Cornwall, will give a little idea of the havoc wrought:—"One of the saddest features of the storm is the loss of bird-life. The deadly stillness of the bush is to me simply awful. Lying round about my place there are a pair of Leach's Kingfishers (*Dacelo leachi*), a pair of Koel Cuckoos (*Centropus phasianus*), two or three Crows (*Corvus coronoides*), and one Black Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus quoyi*). All the hundreds of Honey-eaters, &c., that were in the habit of coming into the garden are utterly gone; the Doves, which used to come into the yard and feed with the fowls, are also gone, and I fear greatly that it will be a long, long time before we shall see the fluttering wings and hear the cheerful twitter and whistle of our little friends again. You will be glad to know that my collection did not come to grief. When the house came down, with the piles on which it stood, it fell so gently that we barely felt it; the roar of the cyclone drowned all the noise of falling, and not one single egg in my cabinet was out of place." Another member, Mr. W. G. Harvey, states that, "sad to relate, the birds and beasts are nearly all gone, and, as the country has been devastated for about 100 miles on either side of Mackay, I fear that it will be some years before we can hope to have a full complement of birds in our district."—D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S.

Stray Feathers.

Flight of Galahs.—The accompanying photograph was taken in 1910 by Mr. F. C. Morse, R.A.O.U., at a place 35 miles north of Maxwellton, on the Townsville-Cloncurry railway, North Queensland. The Rose-breasted Cockatoos or Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) are nomadic, and appear at times in immense flocks.

* * *

Albino Birds.—It is interesting to notice the albino phases of some of our birds. In Parrots, for instance, where the red never changes, the green becomes yellow and the blue white; green and blue are both composite colours. In other birds that are shades of black and white the bird becomes pure white, as, for instance, the Emu, Crow, Magpie, Eagle, Hawk, &c. I have never yet heard of a white Bower-Bird, but in any case albinos of any birds are very rare, and, being conspicuous, may soon be killed by birds of prey. A white Magpie often has trouble in securing a mate; the other birds of his kind evidently do not recognize their companion in his new dress. An albino Eagle we had for some years occasionally grew an ordinary-coloured



Le Souef, William Henry Dudley. 1918. "Cyclones and Bird Destruction." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 18(1), 72-73.
<https://doi.org/10.1071/mu918072b>.

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