

PROTECTION OF THE CAPE BARREN GOOSE.

BY COL. W. V. LEGGE, R.A.

There is another bird for the protection of which I would suggest steps be taken by this Society. It is the Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis Novæ Hollandiæ*), a bird of very limited distribution, which is only found to inhabit the Bass Straits Islands, and according to Gould, the adjacent shores of Victoria. I make the suggestion purely in the interests of science, and I am therefore aware that it will be all the more difficult to carry out the matter. This goose is one of the very interesting monotypic generic forms which exist among the *Anatidæ* in Australia, the others being the Semipalmated goose, *Anseranas Melanoleucos*, the pink-eyed duck, *Malacorpynchus Membranaceus*, the musk duck, *Biziura Lobata*, and the freckled duck, *Stictonetta Nævosa*. There is but one species to each of these remarkable genera (all forms peculiar to the Australian region) and it would be a thousand pities to see any of these birds become extinct. In Gould's day he found that the Cape Barren Goose must become extinct owing to its tame disposition, terrestrial mode of life, feeding on the lands near the shore to a great extent. So inert is it described to be that numbers can be knocked down with sticks. The probability is that in the present day its numbers are much fewer than 40 years ago, and it is therefore not an exaggerated view of the case to say, that there is danger of this species being shortly relegated to the category of the Dodo and the Great Auk, a contingency that would be viewed with deep regret by the ornithologists of the whole world. The Cape Barren Goose, it is true, can be easily domesticated, and it breeds in confinement, though apparently not continuously out of its native country. It formed part of a collection given by King William in 1830 to the London Zoological Society, and from 1835 to 1860 it bred 20 times, but after that until 1880 no instance of its breeding occurred. I think the best course to pursue would be to shorten the open season for it by three months and to alter the close season according to observations to be made in the Straits Islands at an early date, to the time best suited to its breeding.

I suggest the latter course, because, if it is desired to preserve our wild fowl to the best advantage, it will be necessary to alter the "open" season to suit the breeding habits of the various species better than it does at present. This

can only be done after more careful observation of the breeding of our wild fowl than has been the case hitherto. Some naturalists might visit the Straits Islands, and after observations on the Cape Barren Goose and enquiry from the inhabitants of the island, smight afford us valuable information respecting it. At present the open season for it, though it inhabits a milder climate than other members of its family in this colony, is the same as the latter, and this cannot be correct. I trust other members of the Society will support me in my plea for this species, and that we shall be able to have something done towards the protection of this very interesting member of the great family of the *Anatidæ*.



Legge, W. Vincent. 1889. "Protection of the Cape Barren Goose." *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 1889, 41–42.

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