

8th November.—Whilst examining one of the small ponds on Reservation Island, I came across a pair of Mountain-Ducks with five fledglings. This is the first time for years they have bred here. They were about a week old, black and white in colour. The instinct of self-preservation was strong in them, for upon observing me they instantly hid amongst the rushes which bordered their home. Found also some young teal on the same island, but was unable to locate any nest. It is very difficult in any case, as Teal, &c., often lay half a mile from water. The Brown Quail (*Synæcus australis*) is now laying, but not to such an extent as toward the end of the month. On Cape Barren Island the Quail is very scarce, and one can go a day's journey without encountering one bird, except close to the coast, where they are a little more numerous.

14th November.—Wood-Swallows are still here in small flocks, but are not laying. The Black and the Pied Oyster-catchers are nesting in great numbers along the coast. One will often find the nest of the Black Oyster-catcher close to that of the Pacific Gull, with whom he always seems to be on good terms. Perhaps it is for mutual support against intruders. The Gull is most interesting when he has any hard article of food to deal with. One will see him emerge from some cleft with a large whelk in his bill. The cunning fellow will select a flat rock, rise above it to the height of about 40 feet, and then drop his booty. The shock will generally break the shell, but if not, he will fly up again and again, until his efforts are crowned with success. One will see conspicuous flat rocks along the coast littered with the evidences of the bird's pertinacity. The Mutton-Birds are said to be very scarce this year, which shows that they must be steadily getting worked out. I think that the remarkably wet season we are having has drowned thousands of the young birds. This has been the wettest summer down here on record.—J. D. MACLAINE. 4/2/04.

Forgotten Feathers.

ALLUSIONS TO AUSTRALIAN AVIFAUNA IN THE JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE OF THE "NIJPTANG."—In an early part of *The Emu* it was suggested that the journals of explorers might be consulted for allusions to Australian birds. The voyage of the squadron under the command of Willem de Vlaming at the end of the 17th century contains some interesting items, which I give, as translated from an anonymous volume published in Amsterdam in 1701 ("*Journal Wegens een Voyagie na het onbekende Zuid-land en wyders na Batavia.*") The journal records the course taken by the hooker *Nijptang*, of which vessel Gerrit Collart was captain, Theodoris Heermans "adsistant," and Gerrit Gerritszoon first mate. 31° 43' S. is the latitude recorded on the 13th of January, 1697, at which date the vessels were

off the west coast of Australia. On the previous day the first mate of the *Nijptang* and other members of the ship's company (the writer of the journal being present) had been ashore. "No human beings," says the "Journal," "were to be seen, so that it was evident that no good could be done here." And the writer makes the further observations:—"As for the country, it is sandy, and, in part in which we were, it is covered with trees, amongst which some were from three to four fathoms in diameter at least, but they bear no fruit; in short, it abounds in thistles and thorns. Several of the trees yielded a kind of resin, almost like gumlac, of a brownish-red colour. Everything was shy, human beings and also birds, such as Swans, Gannets, Pelicans, Cockateos, Parrakeets, &c. The best of the place is that there are no vermin (ongedierte) to be seen, but in the daytime one is sorely tormented by flies (vliegen)." * On the 15th day of the same month our author again records the ship's position—30° 17' S.—and again goes ashore with two boatloads of men and officers. "We went," he says, "about six (statute) miles inland, but found no men and no fresh water, only a few human footprints and some resembling those of a dog and a Cassowary." †

On the 30th day of January the ships anchored near South Passage, leading into Denham Sound, and on the 1st of the following month two of the captains went ashore. In the entry for the 2nd of February we read:—"The two captains (for De Vlaming also had gone ashore) returned on board late in the evening; they had proceeded inland for a distance of from 24 to 28 (statute) miles. Our captain brought with him the head of a large bird; they said that they had seen two nests built of branches and three fathoms at least in circumference."

On the 4th of February, 1697, at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the ships anchored at Dirk Hartog's anchorage, at the north end of Dirk Hartog Island. In the entry for the day in the log-book of the *Geelvink*, De Vlaming remarks:—"The country here is everywhere dry and sandy and treeless, and one can catch or turn over at night as many turtles as one desires to have, and also procure as many turtles' eggs as one requires." ‡ And the author of the *Nijptang* "Journal" says:—"On the 6th (February) there was still much wind. We made but little progress during the day, and returned to the land at night. We saw many turtles and an exceedingly large nest on the top of a great rock, made after the fashion of an 'oyevaar's nest.'" § I have not been able to trace the word "oyevaar" and can only conjecture that it may be a misprint and that "byenaar" may be the word which was used by the writer as a synonym of "bijenvalk." (Honey-Buzzard).—JAMES R. M'CLYMONT. Sandy Bay, Hobart, 3/5/04.

* "Journal," p. 16.

† "Journal," p. 18.

‡ Extracts from De Vlaming's "Journal" are given by Mr. P. A. Leupe in "De Reizen der Nederlanders naar het Zuidland," pp. 153-184.

§ "Journal," p. 21.



McClymont, James R. 1904. "Allusions to Australian Avifauna in the Journal of a Voyage of the "Nijptang"." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 4(1), 22–23. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu904022>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/38293>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu904022>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/379138>

Holding Institution

American Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.