

I found last year on 16th October were only about two days from hatching.

Tooth-billed Bower-Bird (*Scenopæus dentirostris*).—On 17th September I found a playground of this bird about two hours' walk from Hambledon Mill, and decided to spend some time, later on, watching it, in hopes of getting some clue to the position of the nest. So on 22nd October I seated myself near the bower and watched the bird from 10 till 12. As his cries seemed to be answered by another bird not far away, I then followed the sound and found another playground about 100 yards away, which I watched from 12 till 3. Only one bird was at each bower, and as their antics were the same one description will do for both. Throughout the time I watched only one bird was at the playground, and he appeared to have no interest in anything but his collection of leaves. He would fly away occasionally for another leaf or some fruit, returning in two or three minutes, when he would place the leaf in position, upside down, have a look at the others to see if they were all right—but at no time played with them—and then fly to a twig about 8 feet above the leaves, and there perform; but his repertoire was very limited, his favourite number being the harsh, scolding note of the Drongo (*Chibia bracteata*). Occasionally he would imitate the Rifle-Bird and the Little Thrush (*Collyriocincla parvissima*), and he would frequently give a short, piercing whistle, which seemed to be his natural call. There is a mystery about these birds that will take some explaining. How is it that throughout the three hours that I watched him no other bird put in an appearance? If the owner of the playground had a mate, it seems strange that she did not show herself. If his performance is to attract a mate, he is certainly a most persevering but unfortunate suitor, as he has been hard at it for two months to my knowledge, and the birds are not scarce in the scrub about there, as I have seen them several times. Perhaps his mate was sitting, or he may have been a confirmed old bachelor collecting leaves for a hobby.—A. F. SMITH. Hambledon, Cairns, 22nd November, 1905.

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## Forgotten Feathers.

BY JAMES R. McCLYMONT, M.A., HOBART.

AUSTRALIAN BIRDS IN THE "JOURNAL WEGENS EEN VOYAGIE NA HET ONBEKENDE ZUID-LAND."\*—In 1696 the Governors of the Amalgamated Chartered Company, trading to the Dutch East Indies, decreed that an expedition should be despatched to search for missing vessels, especially for the

\* Extracts from the "Journal" are given in *The Emu*, vol. iv., pp. 22, 23.



*Ridderschap van Hollandt*, of which no news had been received for the space of two years. The Amsterdam Board of Directors was charged with the execution of this decree, and equipped three vessels for the expedition. Willem de Vlaming was placed in command of the squadron, and was instructed to visit the Tristan da Cunha Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, and St. Paul's and Amsterdam Islands. Thence he was to proceed to the unknown south land, by which phrase, or by the name the Land of the Eendragt, Australia was designated in Dutch official despatches in the seventeenth century.

On the 29th of December, 1696, the vessels lay at anchor between Rottnest Island and the mainland. The island was searched for traces of shipwrecks, with but little success. A piece of timber was found which might have been a portion of the deck of a vessel; another piece measured 3 feet long and one span broad. The nails in the wood were much corroded. The search for shipwrecked mariners was equally unsuccessful on the coast of the mainland adjacent to Rottnest Island, but there were found several novelties which might have been turned to good account had their utility been better recognized, or had they fallen into the hands of inventive possessors. On the 30th and 31st of December, 1696, and on the 2nd of January, 1697, De Vlaming records in his "Journal" the finding of odoriferous wood, portions of which were subsequently submitted to the Council of the Dutch East Indies at Batavia; from these an oil was obtained by distillation. And on the 13th of January a dark red resin, which is said to resemble lac, was observed exuding from certain trees. But that which most awakened interest was a *rara avis*—the Black Swan. Many of these handsome birds were seen on Swan River; on the 11th of January, we read in the "Journal" (the title of which is cited above) that nine or ten Swans were killed or captured. Three were carried to Batavia alive, but died soon after their arrival.\*

Several boat expeditions ascended Swan River whilst the vessels were anchored between Rottnest Island and the mainland. During one of these outings the song of the "Nachtgael" was heard. The bird to which our author refers is probably the Nightingale, although it is quite within the range of possibility that the Wood-Lark is signified by this word, and one description of it as a bird which warbles almost all night long in the spring months befits the Sedge-Warbler better than perhaps any other bird. Nocturnal bird-songsters are uncommon in all parts of the world, and memory reverts to Gilbert's description of the

\* Letter of the Governor-General and Councillors to the Managers of the East India Company at the Amsterdam Chamber, "The Part borne by the Dutch in the Discovery of Australia," by J. E. Heeres, p. 84. Willem van Oudhoorn was in office as Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies in 1697.



song of the Long-billed Reed-Warbler, a nearly allied Australian representative of the Sedge-Warbler, which is abundant in the reed-beds of Swan River.\* It is in all probability the bird whose song was heard by the explorers. Two birds were seen on the river which it is difficult to recognize, owing to the archaic names by which they are designated. In an augmented edition of the Dictionary of Kilianus, published in 1642, the "Kropgans" is said to resemble a Swan. The Latin equivalent is "Onocrotalus," but what bird Latin authors called by that name is very doubtful. Although "Kropgans" is often rendered "Pelican," I am of opinion that the above-quoted definition indicates the Gannet rather than the Pelican. "Rotgans" is also a puzzling word. It is the name of the *Anser minor* of authors of olden times, and is so called in order to distinguish it from *Anser cinereus* or *major*—"Graeuwgangs" in the Dutch vernacular. The former bird is, I believe, the *Anser albifrons*, the latter the *Anser anser* of modern authors. There is little room to doubt that the "Rotgans" of the diarist is the Cape Barren Goose, although the fact that in our days the Cape Barren Goose does not frequent continental rivers precludes a satisfactory identification. Other birds which were seen at this stage of the journey, and which are merely named in the "Journal" of the voyage, are Divers (by which we must understand Cormorants), Cockatoos, and Parrakeets. All the birds which were seen were shy, and flew away at the approach of the voyagers. Little Cormorants, White-tailed Black Cockatoos, and Yellow-collared Parrakeets were with little doubt amongst the number. No human beings were encountered, although the smoke of fires was seen.

On the 15th of January De Vlaming followed the coast northwards until latitude 30° 17' S. was reached, which is that of Jurien Bay. Two boats were sent on shore, and soundings taken. The country near the landing-place is described as being sandy and treeless, and neither human beings nor fresh water could be found.

It has been mentioned in the pages of this magazine that the word "Emu" is derived from the Portuguese "Ema," possibly, we may add, indirectly and through French. "Ema" appears to have been originally a name of the Crane, afterwards of the Ostrich, and finally of various other Struthious birds, such as the Cassowary of Ceram and the Rhea of the Brazilian and Patagonian sub-regions. "Cassowary" is said to be a Malay word; it was adopted by the Dutch in the form "Kasuaris," to designate the Cassowaries of Ceram and New Guinea. Both this word and the word "Emu" appear to have been bestowed upon the *Dromæus* of ornithologists at an early date in the history of

\* Gould, "Handbook to the Birds of Australia," vol. i., p. 403.



New South Wales. Cassowaries, we learn from the "Journal," were seen on the date mentioned above. These were almost certainly Emus, for the country described by the writer is not of the kind affected by the Cassowary, nor has that bird been discovered in the western coastal districts of Australia.

On the 30th day of January, 1697, latitude  $26^{\circ} 8' S.$  was observed, which is approximately that of False Entrance. On the 1st of February the pilot of the *Geelvink* left the ships in one of the *Geelvink's* boats in order to ascertain the position of Dirk Hartog's Reede, and the captains of two of the vessels made an excursion inland for the distance of six or seven Dutch miles, from which they returned on the following day, bringing the head of a large bird and the report that they had seen two huge nests built of branches—probably Eagles' aeries? The pilot returned to the ships on the 3rd of February, and reported that he had passed through the channel now named South Passage, and had followed the coast of Dirk Hartog's Island to its northern extremity. There on an acclivity a tin plate was found lying on the ground, having certain words traced upon it, whereof the purport ran that the ship *Eendragt*, of Amsterdam, Dirck Hartoog master, had arrived there on the 25th day of October, 1616, and had departed for Bantam on the 27th day of the same month. The pilot brought the dish with him and also brought two turtles which had been caught on the island. The squadron anchored in Dirk Hartog's Reede on the 4th of February, and remained there until the 12th day of that month. The anonymous diarist relates that on the 6th of February many turtle were seen, and also a very large nest at the corner of a large rock, made in the fashion of the nest of a Stork. Our author does not say to which Stork he refers; but it may be presumed that it is the White Stork (*Ciconia alba*), which, although it places its nest on a building or in a tree, may have nested, and most probably, like its congener the Black Stork, did formerly nest, on ledges of rock. In Australia the Black-necked Stork builds its nest in large trees growing in or near swamps; \* possibly, like the Black Stork, it also selects rocky nesting-sites. †

De Vlaming took leave of the Australian coast at  $21^{\circ} S.$  lat., and proceeded to Batavia, where he arrived on the 20th of March; he had failed to accomplish the object for which the expedition had been resolved upon, but had added considerably to the company's acquaintance with the hydrography pertaining to the route which their ships followed between the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia.

\* A. J. Campbell, "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," p. 969.

† Perhaps the nest of the Osprey.—EDS.



McClymont, James R. 1906. "Australian Birds in the "Journal wegens een Voyage na het onbekend Zuid-land."." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 5(4), 211–214.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/mu905211>.

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