

"MANY a year has come and gone since we first knew Heidelberg, and listened to the Bell-Birds pealing their chime of wood-notes wild from the huge eucalypts which, in the days of Batman and Fawkner, fringed the banks of the winding stream. Below the town still flows the Yarra, perennial as of yore, fed by mountain streams and unfailing rivulets. But how changed are the woods and fields and the reed-fringed lagoons which in earlier days followed its winding course. The girdling reed-beds which sheltered the wild-fowl have disappeared before the encroaching live stock. A bare pond-like outline alone remains where once lay the mysterious mere—haunt of the Bittern, the Heron, the Ibis, and the Pied Wild Goose."—ROLF BOLDREWOOD, *The Australasian*, Melbourne, 13th June, 1908.

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MORE ABOUT CORMORANTS *v.* FISHES.—I was much interested in Mr. Mattingley's paper on "Cormorants in Relation to Fishes,"* and agree with him that the harm done by these birds is altogether over-estimated. Fishermen are too prone to attribute the depletion of the fishing beds and streams to the depredations of the Cormorant. They will not admit that the shoals of fish taken in the nets from these same fishing grounds have anything to do with the diminution of their numbers. They simply scout the idea. The whole of the blame is laid upon the poor defenceless bird, and the exaggerated tales of its misdeeds are accepted without question by most folk, either because they have no opportunities of observing the bird's habits, or do not take the trouble to investigate for themselves. It is man all the time who is responsible for the decrease in numbers of the fish. In Tasmania there are many inland streams never visited by a Cormorant, yet a wise Fisheries Board of Commissioners have found it necessary to restock the streams with ova and fry to prevent them being a useless asset, so far as angling is concerned. Our fishermen complain of the growing scarcity of the fish on the East Coast—blame the Cormorants, of course. On the West Coast fish are abundant, but the West is rough and stormy, and seldom is it safe for the fishing boats to venture there. The East, on the contrary, is sheltered, and the waters are calm, consequently, the fishing craft are always along the Eastern Coast. The Cormorants are equally as numerous on the western shore as on the eastern. Why, then, are fish more abundant at the former place if the Cormorant is such a destroyer as they would have us believe? It is almost useless trying to vindicate the bird—one invariably meets with ridicule. Few have a good word for the "Shag," as it is commonly termed; it is the most despised of birds. With a companion I cycled to a swamp, some 12 miles from town, to observe Musk-Ducks, but we were unsuccessful in our quest. An old fence runs through the centre of the swamp, which covers

* *Emu*, vol. viii., p. 18.

an area of about 120 acres. On the top of nearly every post was perched a White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax leucogaster*). The attraction could not be fish, there being none in the lagoon excepting eels, and it is rather too early for them to be moving. Evidently the birds were after frogs, &c., which abounded there.—ARTHUR W. SWINDELLS. Hobart, 25/8/08.

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FULHAM (S.A.) NOTES.—

17th April, 1908.—First appearance of Red-capped Robin (*Petræca goodenovii*), travelling south.

19th April.—First appearance of Flame-breasted Robin (*Petræca phænicea*), travelling south.

10th July.—Found Spur-winged Plover (*Lobivanellus lobatus*) nesting—three eggs.

22nd July.—The first Pectoral Rail (*Hypotaenidia philippinensis*) has put in an appearance for the season.

27th July.—Discovered Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) nesting in rushes near water—nine eggs. Another Rail (*H. philippinensis*) has joined the one which came on the 22nd.

28th July.—A flock of Swans (*Chenopsis atrata*), numbering 40, passed over my house at 5 p.m. I have not been out in the swamps one night lately without seeing several flocks; they seem to be increasing rapidly since totally protected.

9th August.—Pair of Grey Shrike-Thrushes (*Collyriocincla harmonica*) appears, making a great noise, and calling for hours in their melodious way.

10th August.—Shrike-Thrushes open attack upon Black-Birds (introduced).

13th August.—Heard first call of Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*).

14th August.—Discovered Whistling Eagle's (*Haliastur sphenurus*) nest in course of construction in large isolated gum-tree; observed four birds in the vicinity.

23rd August.—Eagle's nest contained a clutch of three eggs. Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) started to build under verandah.

9th September.—Swallows (*H. neoxena*) commenced to line with gum leaves old nests which are situated under verandah. Discovered nest of Tawny-shouldered Podargus (*P. strigoides*) constructed of quite a bunch of dry twigs, placed on a horizontal fork not 3 yards from roof of house. These birds last season brought out two young ones in same place, but during a stormy night lost one. The remaining young bird could be seen perched between the old birds any day for the last 12 months.—(CAPT.) S. A. WHITE. Fulham (S.A.), 5/9/08.

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NEST AND EGGS OF CALAMANTHUS MONTANELLUS (Rock Field-Wren, Milligan, *Emu*, vol. ii., p. 201).—As I believe the eggs of this species are hitherto undescribed, I append account of the finding of a clutch to-day (28th August, 1908). Mr. Milligan and party only



Swindells, Arthur W. 1908. "More about Cormorants v Fishes." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 8(2), 96–97.
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