

Tasmanian. For the better protection of birds, notably Cape Barren Geese and Mutton-Birds, it is suggested that the islands contiguous to Wilson's Promontory might, for obvious reasons, be transferred to the control of Victoria.

Camp-Out on Phillip Island.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, COL. MEM. B.O.U.

AS it was inconvenient for some members attending the Melbourne session of the A.O.U. to take the fortnight's cruise in Bass Strait, a land party was organized for a week's camp-out on Phillip Island, Western Port, for observation chiefly among the Mutton-Bird rookeries on Cape Wollomai.*

The party consisted of Mesdames Israel, Mellor, Campbell, Misses Eberhard, Mellor (2), Masters Israel, French, Messrs. J. Mellor, A. C. C. Clarke, A. Bishop, C. E. Campbell, A. J. Campbell (leader), and R. A. Murray (cook).

Leaving Melbourne early on Tuesday, 24th November, by train and steamer the party reached San Remo about 2 p.m. Here fishermen J. F. Brown and Son were in readiness to convey excursionists, luggage, and provisions across the eastern entrance to the appointed camping site on the shore near Cape Wollomai, the great headland of Phillip Island—the selected site of the camp having some days previously been kindly “pegged out” by Constable Kelleher, of San Remo. By nightfall all were safe and snug under canvas.

The encampment consisted of six tents, securely sheltered amongst tea-tree, protected on the weather side by sand-dunes heavily clothed with scrub. The only disadvantage was with regard to water, which had to be carried some distance from soaks.

At 5 o'clock next morning the cook sounded the gong for coffee and biscuits, and shortly afterwards all the party were filing their way through the dewy and scented tussock-grass on Cape Wollomai to explore the Mutton-Bird burrows. Eggs as yet were not plentiful, but sufficient were “hooked” for breakfast. *Puffinus* eggs and bacon (fried) make a most *recherché* meal. The remainder of the day was employed in examining the whole of the rookeries in the neighbourhood, and observations made regarding the extent of the encroachment of wind-blown sand-drifts upon the western side—a serious matter. In the evening, at dusk, the majority of observers were on pig-face weed-covered declivities of the back beach, witnessing the incoming flight of birds—a most marvellous sight, often described by previous writers. The members who remained in camp observed the *Manawatu* (with the A.O.U.'s Strait expedition on board) pass out of the Eastern Entrance and round

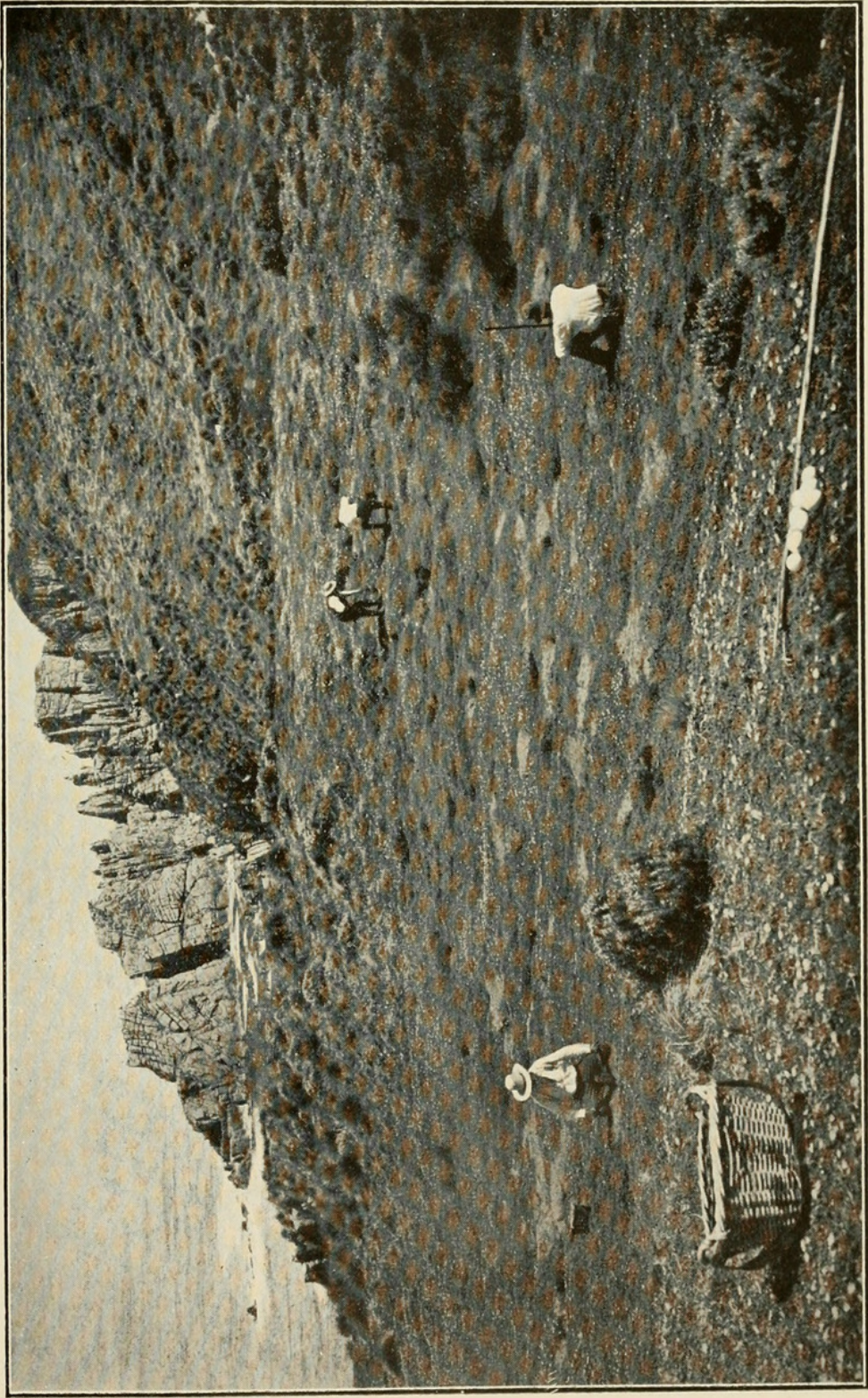
* For locality, see map with “Expedition to Islands of Bass Strait.”

Red Point, bound for King Island. The steamer passed close enough for the passengers to exchange greetings with the shore party.

Thursday, the 26th, was a day of interest. His Excellency Sir Thomas Gibson-Carmichael, the State Governor, had intimated his intention of visiting the camp and rookeries that day. There came a change in the weather—rain descended, and continued till about 4 o'clock. This detained the vice-regal party. However, about 5 o'clock in the afternoon the Government steamer *Lady Loch* arrived and cast anchor off Red Point. His Excellency, accompanied by Mr. Victor Hood, Mr. C. N. Hake, and Captain Bolger, landed, and at 7 o'clock were received by the ornithologists and escorted across the island for an evening's observation. A straight cut was made for the pig-face weed rookery, where, the ground being devoid of scrub, the burrows and movements of the birds could be better seen. The incoming birds did not seem so numerous as on the previous evening. Nevertheless, judging by the flights seen and the noises heard everywhere, it was a strange experience for persons who had never been on a Mutton-Bird rookery before. His Excellency evinced the greatest interest in the novelty of the scene, and asked many questions concerning the life-history of these remarkable Petrels. Notwithstanding the light shed from two tubular lamps, the return to the camp in the darkness was somewhat rough, and there were many tumbles in the tussocks ere the inner beach was safely reached. Amid cheers from the ornithologists and other campers assembled on the shore, His Excellency, with a basketful of eggs, put off for the *Lady Loch*, which departed for Melbourne at daylight.

The remainder of the week was pleasantly spent egging, fishing, photographing, and observing; while the panoramic scene—marine and landscape combined—from the crown of the Cape was especially admired for grandeur. On a calm day, out to sea, could be observed various flocks of Mutton-Birds floating in dark patches, which alternately rose to view, then fell out of sight, to the motion of the ocean swell.

Probably the most entertaining and romantic night spent was when all the party camped upon a rookery where the birds were thickest. About 9 o'clock the observers, with blankets, rugs, and ready-made coffee, &c., repair by the light of a young moon to the ever-fascinating back beach. Portions of the route are simply alive with birds, which scatter right and left before the pedestrians—clumsily flapping against tussock or scuttling through bush to get out of the way, while the whole place above and below ground is a babel of bird noises—a perfect pandemonium, unique, and comparable to nothing else on earth. As the moon is setting in the sea, a sheltered nook is selected where



Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) Eggging
(Pig-face Weed Rookery, Phillip Island).

some of the observers essay to sleep, but the continuous weird midnight noise prevents them. Those who do snatch "forty winks" are rudely disturbed by web-footed creatures awkwardly waddling over the sleepers' prostrate forms. The beautiful morning star heralds the dawn of day, when, in the crisp morning air, swarms of dusky-coloured birds with mysterious rat-like actions run over the ground, through the scrub, and toss themselves over the cliffs, and in the obscure light disappear seaward. When broad daylight arrives, 260 eggs are picked up, mostly upon the ground, without the aid of crooks. A return is made to headquarters camp, which is reached about half-past 8 o'clock, when a good breakfast rewards the hungry and tired night-observers.

Before returning to Melbourne, a visit was paid by the ornithologists to Mr. John Cleeland, an old colonist of sterling repute, who owns the station Wollomai, which includes the leasing of the Cape for grazing purposes. The visitors were received right royally, and many early reminiscences were exchanged, not forgetting the mention of the famous horse Wollomai, which won for Mr. Cleeland the Melbourne Cup of 1875.

OBSERVATIONS.

(1.) The total area of the Cape headland is about 400 acres, clothed chiefly with tussock-grass, sword-grass, stunted "blue" bush, horehound,* and pig-faced weed (*Mesembryanthemum*). But about a quarter of the area may be described as sand drift.

(2.) From about 150 to 200 acres consist of Mutton-Bird rookeries, the numerous rabbit-like burrows being chiefly on the ocean frontage, but some of the rookeries extending inland. It is difficult to estimate the total number of birds frequenting the Cape for breeding purposes; it is probably not less than one million.

(3.) Judging by observations made in former seasons, the number of birds does not appear to be decreasing. But serious encroachments are being made on the western rookeries (near the neck of the Cape) by wind-blown sand-dunes. Some of the rookeries have been already enveloped, and more are threatened unless the authorities stay the sand movement by such means as the planting of marram grass, &c. *An urgent recommendation is made accordingly.* Local observers say the sand is moving very fast.

(4.) From the evidence of old egggers, it would appear that the Mutton-Birds arrive later to lay than they did in former years, say 20 years ago. Hitherto the focus of arrivals occurred about the 24th, 25th, and 26th November. Now it would appear to be about the 28th, 29th, and 30th, when many eggs are gathered

* Introduced plant.

from the surface of the ground, scattered throughout the herbage, apparently through the "glut," there being no time or room to deposit them in the burrows. The last season, as late as the 5th December, two parties gathered 200 freshly deposited eggs from the surface of the various rookeries.

(5.) Egging-parties were coming and going all the egging season, but a week's observation proved that at no time were more than 15 boats present, or about 70 persons camped ashore.

(6.) It is recommended that campers pay a nominal fee, as those do on the shores of Port Phillip Bay, or that a small toll per dozen be levied on the eggs or birds collected.

(7.) It is also recommended that dogs shall not be permitted to accompany egging or birding parties on the rookeries.

NOTE.—So far as the Cape is concerned, there appears to be little or no "birding" performed during the autumn.

Bird Notes from Cleveland, Tasmania.

BY (MISS) J. A. FLETCHER.

PART I.

AS far as Tasmania was concerned, 1908 proved one of the driest years on record, and, as many places in the island did not receive their usual winter soaking, the drought was severely felt as summer approached. In this particular district of the Tasmanian midlands, which ranges from 600 to 700 feet in altitude, a succession of heavy frosts was experienced, while during the preceding year only a week's severe frost was chronicled.

Owing to the absence of the usual winter and spring rains several small lagoons dried up, consequently some of the water-fowl retreated to the larger ones, while others, such as the Native-Hen (*Tribonyx mortieri*) and the Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) made the South Esk River their headquarters. Still, in spite of the fact that the nesting season seemed to be somewhat erratic, many notes were made which may prove interesting. These lagoons are basin-like depressions, and as they are not fed by any creek, drainage from the surrounding hills must find its way by soakage to them. Unlike many of the Southern lagoons, the bottom of these, though muddy, is fairly firm, while in many parts the water, owing, I suppose, to decaying vegetable matter, is very irritating to the skin. Three species of reeds grow in these watery depressions—the ordinary brown, flat reed on the edges and in the shallower waters; a round, green, shorter one in the deeper parts; and amongst this latter rise clumps of a rush often exceeding 6 feet in height. These latter are the favourite nesting haunts of the Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*).



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