

stinging-tree (*Laportea gigas*) was noticed growing here freely, with its large leaves of soft appearance. In the evening an illustrated lecture was given in the Alexandra Hall on "Bird-Life in Australia," by Mr. D. Le Souëf. Mr. H. K. Alford presided. Early next morning Dr. Price kindly took several of us in his motor cars to a very extensive view at the edge of the Darling Downs, not far from the town. In the foreground was much broken country, and in the distance the Liverpool Ranges could be seen, while behind us, stretching as far as the eye could see, were the far-famed Darling Downs. We were much struck with the fertility of this splendid portion of the Commonwealth. About mid-day we left this town, bidding farewell to Mr. Longman, Dr. Price, and others, who had given up so much of their time in showing us the places of especial note in their neighbourhood. As the line gradually descended to the lower country, on passing along the hillsides beautiful views were frequently obtained, especially of dense scrub-covered gullies. The Parry wallaroo and banded wallaby were often seen near the line from the train.

WARWICK.

We arrived early in the afternoon at Warwick, and were met by Dr. Phillips and Messrs. S. J. Harwood, C. C. Dornbusch, P. W. Pears, and others. In the evening Mr. D. Le Souëf gave an illustrated lecture in the Technical College on "Bird-Life." Mr. S. J. Harwood presided, and there was a good attendance. After the lecture we were kindly entertained at supper by the gentlemen above mentioned. Next morning Dr. Phillips drove us out to his farm, where we enjoyed an extensive view over the surrounding country, and also observed a fair number of birds in the adjacent scrubs. We left in the afternoon for Sydney, *en route* for home.

This short account of our trip cannot be closed without expressing the very great appreciation of the visiting ornithologists of the kindness received from the good people of Queensland. Everything possible was done to make our visit as enjoyable as possible. The only regret was that we could not see more of the resources of the splendid northern State, with its vast agricultural and other resources, as yet hardly touched.

President's Address.

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

THE UNION AND ITS WORK.

The Union.—The first mutterings of a union of ornithologists commenced in Melbourne, 1896, with a dinner and *reunion* of bird-lovers, chiefly oologists. These delightful socials, at which nothing stronger than tea and coffee was imbibed, recurred at convenient intervals till the 7th November, 1900 (10 years ago next month), when it was definitely decided to form an Austral-

asian Ornithologists' Union, and to hold the first general meeting in Adelaide the following year.

That Melbourne meeting is now historic. There were 21 persons present, and a copy of their signatures and seals is preserved in the first volume of *The Emu*, the Union's official organ. It is a remarkable coincidence that 21 was the exact number of the founders of the now famous American Ornithologists' Union, started in 1883. In order to show that the preliminary meeting was thoroughly inter-State, it may be mentioned that Mr. D. M'Alpine, Government Vegetable Pathologist, and several other members of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, were present; Mr. C. F. Belcher, LL.B., represented the Field Naturalists' Club of Geelong; Mr. J. W. Mellor, the South Australian Ornithological Association; while apologies were received from the late Sir Malcolm M'Eacharn (Mayor of Melbourne), Mr. C. W. De Vis, M.A. (Queensland), Mr. S. W. Moore, M.L.A. (New South Wales), Colonel W. V. Legge (Tasmania), and others.

Among other happy circumstances at this time, their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (now their Majesties the King and Queen) were visiting the Commonwealth, and graciously bestowed their patronage—the only royal favour of the kind conferred during their Highnesses' Australian tour—on this new national Union, with its simple twin planks: the study and protection of birds.

A simple code of rules was drawn up—18 in all—which a coldly critical lawyer has described as somewhat starved; but there is the compensating balance: the fewer and simpler the rules the less the number of transgressors.

The first session of the A.O.U. (now "Royal"), Adelaide, 1901, was a thorough success; any forebodings of the promoters to the contrary melted away before the enthusiasm and warm reception they received at the hands of the good people of South Australia. The first evening, a lantern lecture, "An Evening with Australian Birds," by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S., was given in the Federal Hall (a very appropriate name by way of a beginning). There was a large and representative audience, including His Excellency Lord Tennyson (then State Governor), Lord Richard Nevill, Sir Samuel Way (Chief Justice) and Lady Way, the Hon. T. H. Brooker (Minister of Agriculture and Education, who kindly occupied the chair), and others.

The following evening the session settled down to business, and Colonel Legge (Tasmania) delivered the first presidential address. Since, two other annual sessions have been held at Adelaide, and two each at Sydney, Melbourne, and Tasmania. To give details of the meetings would be merely to repeat a progression of successes, which threaten to be outshone by the splendour of this our first session in Brisbane. But I must not omit to mention one most important conference in connection with the last Melbourne session, when Government representatives of the administrators of the various inter-State *Game Acts* met to consider proposals made by

the Union for the betterment of bird protection. Some of the recommendations adopted are already bearing fruit.

Nor must I omit to mention the suggestion (*Emu*, vol. vi., p. 103) of one of my predecessors, Colonel C. S. Ryan, in his presidential address on "The Protection of Birds," delivered before the Hobart Session, 1907:—"To educate the people to love birds is better for their (birds') protection than many acts of legislation. Let us, then, educate the children. I am confident, in speaking for my own State (Victoria), that the Director for Education, Mr. Frank Tate, with his well-known love for 'nature study,' would introduce Australian ornithology into the curriculum of State Schools. Such a study would surely 'catch on' with the scholars, because birds are, perhaps, the most fascinating branch of natural history."

A "Bird-Day" has been introduced into the Victorian State schools, and has "caught on" in a marvellous manner. Time and space alone prevent me from enlarging on its wonderful success. The Education Department has also issued a remarkably cheap descriptive list of Victorian birds, which was so well received that Inspector Leach is compiling a more complete edition, plentifully illustrated, in some instances with coloured plates. This is a distinct advance in the education of the young. Other States are introducing ornithology into their school systems, notably South Australia and Tasmania, while I understand Queensland will publish her first bird articles for the children in *The School Paper* for January.

Working Excursions.—A very conspicuous feature in connection with the annual sessions has been the working camp-outs or excursions, when ornithologists from the various States met and worked together in the field. I need hardly dilate upon the pleasure and profit accruing to the participators in such excursions. The outings are eminently practical, and a good training-ground for rising ornithologists, perchance explorers. Enlightened Governments have, I think, recognized these facts; hence the assistance freely given from time to time to the Union's expeditions.

Regarding a training-ground for explorers, I fear some of the members of the present expedition to the coral islands of the Capricorn Group, off Gladstone, will enjoy a rough time, but I promise them rougher times ahead when we hope, in the near future, to ornithologically explore the very important Melville Island, North Australia, or probably some of the sub-antarctic islands of New Zealand. In this connection I am reminded of a letter I received many years ago from the late Professor Alfred Newton, of Cambridge—"You will hardly be satisfied until you have completed the islands of Antarctica." We did request the Admiralty for a loan of a gunboat to explore the Royal Company's Islands, far to the southward of Tasmania. No doubt a vessel would have been provided had the Admiralty been able to find the islands, which, since our request, have been, by order, expunged as myths from the official charts.

"*The Emu*."—Although members of the Union are scattered throughout the Commonwealth and New Zealand, and there is only one general meeting a year, how is it we remain such a successful and coherent association? Because there is elected annually a council which, amongst other details, controls a magazine—*The Emu*—the "outward and visible sign" of the Union, so to speak. The success of this magazine, which is published quarterly, has been phenomenal, and the marvel of older ornithological associations, which have endured great hardships at their beginnings. Take, for instance, the venerable and now world-spread British Ornithologists' Union. Our brethren abroad complain that our journal is hardly scientific enough, while those at home would make it more popular in substance. Our success has doubtless been the happy mean between these two extremes. During the last 10 years (we are now in the tenth volume of *The Emu*) we have never once wanted "copy." Like the food of the fine birds we all so much love, it has always been just at hand when wanted. Our last "copy" is all expended on the current (October) issue, and yet there has since been promised, by that public-spirited ornithologist, Mr. H. L. White, of Belltrees, N.S.W., a very important article, the result of a collection and field notes of a young and intellectual collector, Mr. G. F. Hill, whom Mr. White has liberally subsidized for a season in the field of far North-West Australia; and the editors have just received from Mr. J. C. M'Lean, of New Zealand, a lengthy and most valuable contribution to the field ornithology of the North Island of the Dominion, including a romance, and photographs of nests in the last retreat—there is a melancholy ring about these words, the last retreat—of the *Miro australis*—a bush bird which the late Sir Walter Buller, the eminent author of the "History of the Birds of New Zealand," supposed to be, if not altogether, well nigh extinct.

Narrative of the Expedition to the Islands of the Capricorn Group.

BY CHARLES BARRETT, MELBOURNE.

THE conditions under which the expedition to the Capricorn Islands in connection with the Brisbane session of the R.A.O.U. was made were generally favourable. Through the kindness of the Minister for Customs (Mr. Frank Tudor), the Fisheries Investigation vessel *Endeavour* was placed at the Council's disposal for a period of ten days; and, throughout, Captain Cartwright and the officers associated with him did all in their power to further the objects of the expedition by meeting the wishes of the leaders in regard to short voyages among the islands. The trawler also supplied fish on several occasions, while members of the crew helped willingly with the heavy work of trans-



Campbell, Archibald James. 1910. "President's Address." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 10(3), 178–181.

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