

eaters (*Meliphaga phrygia*) was very busy feeding their young in a nest built in a small box-tree, and a few yards further on a pair of Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Pteropodocys phasianella*) had been breeding for years. The young of these birds remained with their parents for at least twelve months, often being about the nesting locality during the whole year. Four seasons ago I was driving through open forest country, when I saw two Cuckoo-Shrikes fly from a tree, and found on the same branch two of their nests, within 3 feet of each other (young birds in each nest). Five adult birds were attending to the nestlings' wants. The following year I closely watched a pair of birds which nested near my house. They built in exactly the same spot as in the previous season. The three young birds took possession of an old Magpie-Lark's nest in a tree near by, and in it one of them deposited three eggs. The Grallinas had built a new nest in the same tree, and another pair had theirs in an adjoining tree. In other trees in the neighbourhood the following species were found breeding:—*Ptilotis penicilliata*, *Myzantha garrula*, *Acanthochæra carunculata*, *Entomyza cyanotis*, *Tropidorhynchus corniculatus*, *Philemon citreigularis*, *Pomatorhinus frivolus*, *Coracina robusta*, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, *Artamus superciliosus*, *Artamus tenebrosus*, *Climacteris picumna*, *Lalage tricolor*, *Sisura inquieta*, *Aphelocephala leucopsis*, four species of Parrots, and seven other species which build upon the ground.

---

### “The Austral Avian Record.”

*The Austral Avian Record*, No. 2, vol. i., has been published.\* It purports to contain the names (trinomials, except in one instance) of over 200 new forms or sub-species of Australian birds.

The additions have been made chiefly through the re-examination (after having passed such an expert as Professor Collett) of a collection made by Dr. Dahl, of Norway, in the Northern Territory some years ago, a large collection made by Mr. J. P. Rogers for Mr. Mathews on Melville Island, and a valuable gratuitous collection made more recently by Capt. S. A. White on Kangaroo Island, and elsewhere in South Australia.

As John Gould was known in his day, on account of his magnificent folio works, as the “pictorial” ornithologist, so Gregory Mathews may certainly be designated the “sub-specific” author, for his method in very minutely subdividing the Australian avifauna.

Fortunately, Mr. Mathews is editor of his own *Record* (without its wrapper there would be no name or authority for the articles contained)—an organ responsible to no society or union. If the multiplication of new forms be correct, then Australian ornithology obviously must be in a very primitive state, but should the differentiation of all known Australian birds on authoritative

\* No. 1 was noticed in *The Emu*, vol. xi., p. 260.

lists and catalogues be fairly up to date, then the introduction of Mr. Mathews' subdivisions will undoubtedly tend to lead students to endless confusion.

For instance, take Mr. Mathews' attempt to unravel the Crows, which, according to such an undoubted expert as Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, has only led to greater confusion (*vide* p. 44, this issue).

As this magazine (*The Emu*) stands primarily to "popularize the study of native birds," it must be true to its objects and warn students and bird-lovers not to be misled by Mr. Mathews' mazes of subdivisions, which in many cases can only prove individual or local variation. Were not Gould, Ramsay, Legge, North, and other Australians good at discriminating species and forms? How have they all passed so many of Mr. Mathews' discoveries? And Drs. Sharpe and Gadow and the other talented authors of the official "Catalogue of Birds" of the British Museum—did they not handle and examine much Australian material, including most of Mr. Mathews' so-called "new forms"?

There may be license for numerous sub-species, and possibly species, in a new and ornithologically unexplored insular region like Melville Island, Northern Territory, but what excuse is there for creating new sub-species for a number of common birds found within the railway suburban radius of the metropolis of Melbourne, where so many ornithologists of good standing have been born and reared. The following may be cited as instances:—*Dacelo gigas* (*tregellasi*), *Petræca leggii* (*frontalis*), *P. cucullata* (*vigorsii*), *Smicrornis brevirostris* (*viridescens*), *Pachycephala gutturalis* (*youngi*), *Cinclosoma punctata* (*neglectum*), *Psophodes olivaceus* (*scrymgeouri*), *Oreocincla lunulatus* (*dendyi*), *Acrocephalus australis* (*mellori*), *Megalurus gramineus* (*wilsoni*), *Chthonicola sagittata* (*inexpectata*), *Sericornis frontalis* (*harterti*), *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* (*sandlandi*), *Malurus cyaneus* (*henriettæ*), *Collyriocincla harmonica* (*victoriæ*), *Falcunculus frontatus* (*iredalei*), *Cracticus torquatus* (*olindus*), *Pardalotus striatus* (*sub-striatus*), *Ptilotis leucotis* (*depauperata*), *P. penicillata* (*mellori*), *Acanthochæra carunculata* (*tregellasi*), *Ægintha temporalis* (*tregellasi*), *Corcorax melanorhamphus* (*subniger*), &c.; while it is incautious to give new names to such well-known species migrating to Victoria as *Meliphaga phrygia* (*tregellasi*), *Myiagra rubecula* (*ringwoodi*), *Rhipidura rufifrons* (*inexpectata*), &c.

Mr. Mathews is an Australian by birth, but it is not known whether or not he followed ornithology in his native land. In any case it is evident that he should study his Australian geography practically before proceeding further with his work. No person can write successfully the ornithology of a country from a distance, or from cabinet specimens alone. Even a Gould could not have done it. For this reason it is a pity that Mr. Mathews has completed the first volume of what promised to be a standard work before he visited Australia and acquired indispensable local knowledge. While mentioning Mr. Mathews' work, and taking into consideration the position of the R.A.O.U. regarding Australian ornithology, it is remarkable that not one of the

five parts (the last issued eight months ago) published of his "Australian Birds" has been sent to the Union for review. Does he object to have his work judged from an Australian standpoint? There are no persons more interested in the birds of their own continent than Australians themselves.

The reviewers of this *Record* regret having occasion to use such direct criticism, but in the common interests of Australian ornithology they feel impelled to do so, and in doing so have the entire approval of their Council.

However, Mr. Mathews has recorded for the first time for the Commonwealth a bird of much interest to Australians—namely, the Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola sibirica*, Dresser). There is in the Tring Museum a female collected by Mr. J. P. Rogers at Broome, North-West Australia. According to Seebohm\* this Sandpiper is very local during the breeding season (breeding on the Scandinavian mountains and other northern localities), but its range extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In the Austro-Malayan region its farthest south has been Java.

## The Crows of Australia.

*The Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, No. clxxvi., contains the following critical statement by Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, of the bird department, British Museum, which is of especial interest to Australians:—

"In a paper just published in the *Novitates Zoologicae*, xviii., pp. 442-3 (1912), Mr. G. M. Mathews has given a Reference List to the Birds of Australia, in which he divides the Raven, Crow, and Jackdaw into no less than ten different forms, seven of these being named for the first time: thus adding to the confusion which already existed. He, unfortunately, failed to recognize the true specific differences between the Raven and the Crow, and misapplied the name *C. bennetti* to smaller specimens of the latter. I am glad to say that he now entirely agrees with me on all the main points at issue concerning the Australian *Corvidæ*, and their synonymy, as given below.

"1. **The Raven.** *Corvus coronoides*, Vig. & Horsf.

"? *Corvus australis*, Gmel. S. N. i. p. 365 (1788) [ex Lath. Gen. Syn. i. pt. i. p. 369 (1781)].

"*Corvus coronoides*, Vig. & Horsf., Trans. Linn. Soc. xv. p. 261 (1827) [Parramatta, New South Wales]; Gould, Birds Austr. iv. pl. xviii. (1848) [Tasmania]; Ramsay, *Ibis*, 1865, p. 303 [part.]; Sharpe, Cat. Birds B. M., iii. p. 20 (1877) [part.]

"*Corvus australis*, Gould, Handb. Birds Austr. i. p. 475 (1865) [part.]; Ogilvie-Grant, *Ibis*, 1909, p. 652 [Albany, S.W. Australia].

"*Corone australis*, Sharpe, Cat. Birds B. M. iii. p. 37 (1877);

\* "Geographical Distribution of the Charadriidæ," p. 433.



1912. "'The Austral Avian Record'." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 12(1), 42–44. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu912042>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/81122>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu912042>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/379930>

#### **Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

#### **Sponsored by**

Smithsonian

#### **Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

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>.