

## Correspondence.

"BIRDS OF ROCKINGHAM BAY," BY A. J. CAMPBELL AND H. G. BARNARD, MS.R.A.O.U. (*Emu*, vol. xvii., pp. 2-38).

To the Editors of "*The Emu*."

DEAR SIRs,—On behalf of Mr. Barnard and myself, kindly permit me to make a brief rejoinder to Mr. G. M. Mathews's letter, which he was good enough to forward for the previous (January) *Emu*, p. 157.

Mr. Mathews, in a somewhat patronizing criticism of our paper, states we "fully confirmed the majority of the sub-specific distinctions bestowed" by him, in the district we collected; but where we ventured to disagree with that author, Mr. Mathews imputes it to our "ignorance"—"such ignorance," "lack of knowledge," &c. We bracketed Mr. Mathews's names with those of the R.A.O.U. "Check-list" in a complimentary sense, not because we agreed with all his. Our readers know the bird we are dealing with at once by using the Union's "Check-list"; the same, I am afraid, cannot be said had we used Mr. Mathews's nomenclature only. Therefore it is the Mathewsian "technicalities of nomenclature" that are confusing. Even his last "1913 List" (which he wished the Union to espouse) is "in liquidation," as a student aptly put it. Moreover, Campbell and Barnard's paper of "petty and querulous items" was not written especially for "*extra-Australian scientific workers*," but, with singleness of aim, purely in the interests of Australian ornithology.

We shall get to business and narrow our "little queries" to four particularly cited in Mr. Mathews's letter:—

I.—Almost all ornithological authorities (including Mr. Mathews himself in his "larger undertaking," "*The Birds of Australia*," which he states we "have not considered"), use *Casuarus australis* (Wall) for the Australian Cassowary. Now he revokes on his subscribers, requiring them to deface his fine plate by altering the name *australis* to *johnsonii*. It was the Hon. Walter Rothschild who first suggested that *johnsonii* should take precedence, because an ancient (A.D. 1792) popular miscellany,\* edited by one Shaw, called the *Emu* the "Southern Cassowary." Therefore, as "Southern Cassowary" signifies *Casuarus australis* in technical terms, and as that name (although by inference only) was once previously and erroneously attributed to the *Emu*, it is unavailable for the Cassowary. If that be a sample of the operative laws of nomenclature or of priority, save Australian ornithology from such laws and from such "confusion worse confounded." I defy Mr. Mathews or any other authority to say that there is anything scientifically or ornithologically wrong in the use of the term *Casuarus australis* for the Cassowary.

\* "*The Naturalist's Miscellany*" (of Shaw and Nodder). It contains figures of more than 280 birds, but very poorly executed.—"*Encyclopædia Britannica*."



2.—“No changes should rest on uncertainties,” wisely writes an authority. Mr. Mathews states that Gould’s name for the Tawny Grass-Bird (*Megalurus galactotes*) was proposed for an African bird. There is no direct proof of this, although Mr. Mathews’s opinion is that Temminck’s figure is only “almost certainly” an African *Cisticola*. Therefore, we were truly “amazed” that Mr. Mathews rejected Gould’s perfect, lifelike coloured plate in favour of an old figure of a supposed African species and added to a well-known Australian bird *his own new names*.

3.—Mr. Mathews disparages, because belated news, our statement—“We had the opportunity of proving that Ramsay’s *Eopsaltria inornata* and Hartert’s *Pachycephala peninsulæ* are the same species.” Our sentence should have been elaborated thus:—“*But are not two different sub-species, as shown in Mathews’s last (1913) ‘List.’*” We have examined skins from both of Mathews’s so-called sub-specific localities, also from New Guinea. “No proof is put forward,” says Mr. Mathews. We hold the material.

4, and lastly.—Regarding the *Merops*, one could write pages of speculative interest on the variation and habitat of Bee-eaters. Let it suffice for the present to remark that with the “H. L. White Collection,” together with the national collections at Sydney and Melbourne, there is enough material to enable Australians to work out their “own salvation.” In the first-mentioned collection there is, from the Coongan River, North-West Australia (Mathews’s precise locality for *M. shortridgei*), a male specimen in perfect plumage, perhaps more golden about the head than is usually the case, but it exactly corresponds with the male of a pair collected at Kow Plains, Victoria. Again, there is a typical *M. ornatus* taken by Capt. S. A. White, M.B.O.U., on or near the Nullabor Plain, at the head of the Great Australian Bight—midway between the east and west coasts of Australia. To which stream of migrants (or supposed sub-species), eastern or western, would Mr. Mathews refer this central bird?—I am, &c.,

A. J. CAMPBELL.

Surrey Hills (Vic.), 22/1/18.

---

## Reviews.

[“Descriptive List of the Birds of Tasmania and Adjacent Islands,” by Clive E. Lord, Hobart.]

THERE have been several lists of Tasmanian birds published—Gunn’s and Swan’s, both founded on John Gould; Legge’s, after the “Catalogues of Birds,” British Museum; and last we have Mr. Lord’s, according to Mr. G. M. Mathews’s “1913 List,” and in useful pocket form. In Mr. Lord’s list the vernacular name of the bird is first given, then the technical (trinomial) nomenclature, followed by a few succinct words of description.



Campbell, Archibald James and Barnard, Henry Greensill. 1918.  
"Correspondence." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 17(4), 244–245. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu917244>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/55264>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu917244>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/380431>

**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>.