

approached, and one can readily observe their handsome plumage whilst they are ravishing the flowers for their sweet contents, and at the same time fertilizing them by unconsciously carrying the pollen from one flower to the other. The Spinebill is readily distinguished from other Honey-eaters by its white, brown, and black appearance, its ruby-coloured eye, and its distinctive long, slender bill. This dapper bird acts as a foster-parent to the large Pallid Cuckoo, and it is quite an interesting sight to watch the foster-parent feeding the young Cuckoo, which is much larger than the nest when it is old enough to fly. The nourishing of the Cuckoo is accomplished by the Spinebill by perching on the back of its foster-child, which opens its mouth, doubles back its head, and receives the proffered morsel, consisting of various insects.—A. MATTINGLEY.

Correspondence.

To the Editors of the "The Emu,"

DEAR SIRS,—Will you allow me to reply to Mr. W. T. Foster's remarks *re* "Cormorants: Are They Pests or Otherwise?" which appeared in the last issue of *The Emu*, and in which he criticises my research work. Firstly, I would point out that any research work must be carried out in a scientific manner, otherwise it is of little use. All dates, localities, and so on must be verified, otherwise no reliance can be put upon statements or suppositions. Secondly, Mr. Foster says I examined seventeen specimens, all from the one locality. If he follows up my work he will see I have examined over 60 stomachs, covering the greater part of the year, and from many localities. Your contributor then proceeds to show that I must be wrong, because he saw a fish in a Cormorant's throat 46 years ago, when quite a lad; this is only one bird, and he did not examine the stomach. It is hardly a scientific argument to rely upon one's memory when a boy in 1862. I would further state that a great deal of research work carried out on most scientific lines by my esteemed friend Dr. A. M. Morgan bears me out on all points raised. Many of the specimens taken and dissected by me were taken close to well-known fishing grounds—in fact, in some instances fishermen were catching whiting at the time, yet not one was found in the stomachs of the birds. As for seeing Cormorants swallowing fish, this cannot be taken as evidence, for Mr. Foster did not examine any of their stomach contents, and, as to the species of the fish, it is a mere supposition. I am surprised that your contributor's long years of experience have not shown him that the Cormorant can more easily catch the slow-swimming fish, and thus nature's balance is preserved. It is destructive man who upsets the balance, and blames the unfortunate birds for it. In the opening lines of Mr. Foster's article he says "and perhaps throw some

additional light on the subject of the dietary of the Cormorant." This I consider he has not done, for he has not dissected one single stomach, and relies upon his memory of 1862 for evidence of having seen a single Cormorant with a fish which it could not swallow, and this he admits must have been imprisoned in a pool far from the deep sea.—Yours, &c.,

S. A. WHITE.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—In the October number of *The Emu* appears an article by Mr. W. T. Forster criticising Capt. White's conclusions as to the food of Cormorants. As I have been associated with Capt. White in this work, I hope you will allow me to make a few remarks on the subject. Mr. Forster rightly states that it is "unsafe to generalize from a single case," and yet forms his opinion on *one* observation made more than fifty years ago. The incidents he mentions, of seeing Cormorants diving in water known to contain fish, are not observations—they are pure suppositions, for there is no proof that the birds were capturing marketable fish, or even any fish at all. It is on so-called observations such as these that the Cormorants are condemned by so many people. Capt. White does not "generalize from a single case." We have now dissected and carefully examined the stomach contents of over 60 Cormorants taken from five different localities—all good fishing grounds, and not from localities where marketable fish were scarce, as Mr. Forster, without any evidence whatever, supposes to be the case. Of course, Mr. Forster is mistaken in stating that Cormorants devour their food under water. Neither Cormorants or any other birds, except Penguins, are able to do this; they are obliged to come to the surface to swallow even the smallest fish. Neither Capt. White nor anyone of ordinary intelligence suggests that Cormorants consciously discriminate between marketable and unmarketable fish; but we do contend that they discriminate between those fish which are easily caught and those which are not. The former consist of slow-swimming fish, which depend more upon their harmony with their surroundings than upon their swiftness for their safety, and it is for this reason that Cormorants fish almost invariably over weedy bottoms, where such fish are found. Very few of such fish are of marketable kinds; the only exception I know of is a fish called locally the rock flathead, which lives on weedy bottoms. It is probably an edible fish, but does not come into the market because the fishermen do not find it worth their while to fish in such places. It is not the same as the sand flathead (*Platycephalus fuscus*), an example of which we have not yet found in a Cormorant's stomach. Cormorants do occasionally catch edible fish, for last year, in the mud under a Cormorants' rookery at Port Broughton, I found one garfish among hundreds of thousands of disgorged fish. At

the very time that I was examining this rookery a party of fishermen caught ten dozen whiting less than a mile away; yet in the rookery there was not a single whiting to be found.—Yours,
&c.,

A. M. MORGAN.

46 North-terrace, Adelaide, 11/12/18.

RE-NAMING AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—Regarding the debate on the above-mentioned subject at the conversazione of the R.A.O.U., as recorded in *The Emu*, ante, pp. 144-147, may I presume on your courtesy for a brief rejoinder?

I had hoped to keep the controversy out of this journal by printing my address at my own expense and distributing it privately, leaving my opponents to follow suit, if they thought fit.

Although my address occupied the greater part of the evening, it has been modestly mentioned in less space than you have allotted to each of my opponents and to the chairman's "summing up," leaving readers to infer that I had no case. "No desire was expressed" for a vote, because it was then of little value to either side.

At the opening of my address, and subsequently, I put particular stress on re-naming Australian *endemic* birds. Unfortunately, Mr. Alexander took for his illustrations generic names of *cosmopolitan* birds that he thought required alteration—to wit, *Phalacrocorax* (Cormorants) and *Fregata aquila* (Frigate-Bird). For these the compilers of the R.A.O.U. "Check-list" followed the classification and nomenclature in the British Museum's "Catalogue of Birds," vol. xxvi. Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant dealt with the genera and nomenclature. In the preface to the volume the Director, the late Sir W. H. Flower, F.R.S., certifies:—"The 'Catalogue' is based, not only upon the immense collection of birds in the Museum, but also upon all other available material contained in public or private collections or described in zoological literature. It therefore professes to be a complete list of every bird known at the time of the publication of the volume treating of the group to which it belongs. Under the heading of each species is a copious synonymy, references being given to every mention of it which occurs in standard books or journals. This has been a work of prodigious labour, but it is hoped that, being fairly exhaustive, *it has been done once for all, as far as existing literature is concerned.*" Does Mr. Alexander place his opinion before that expressed by the deceased *savant*, and infer that the nomenclature of an official and classic work is incorrect?

My other opponent, Mr. Mattingley, took very high ground—in fact, so high that it was out of the realm of practical or popular

ornithology. He referred to "the strongest feature of the International Code is what is known as the law of priority," but I took great pains in my address to show that the International Code departed from the original agreement and definition of the arbitrary "law of priority." *This must not be lost sight of.*

Dr. Leach (chairman), in concluding the discussion, states:—"We could not use a different family here" (than elsewhere). The question of "families" of birds was not raised by me. "Over twenty Australian generic names had been finalized" by the International Commission. Dr. Leach might have further added that "the majority were on the present R.A.O.U. 'Check-list,' and among those Mr. Campbell had always contended for." Possibly more Australian names may be "finalized" if proper representation were made to the International Commission.

To conclude with my "profitless propaganda"—an expression, so far as I recollect, not used at the discussion. The "profitless propaganda" has brought me many unsolicited and helpful letters. The following are extracts:—

One from a world-renowned scientist at Washington, U.S.A.:—"What we need, after this war is over, is a world ornithological congress to settle the question once and for all. As to how such a congress could untangle this entire matter is a question I propose to discuss very shortly in the public press. I will not touch upon it here. 'More power to you!'"

From another distinguished American in California:—"Your remarks are in keeping with the motto on the title-page of the A.O.U. 'Check-list': 'Zoological nomenclature is a means, not an end, of zoological science.' I have adhered to the current rules of zoological nomenclature. Such a course involves changes in nomenclature that are certainly embarrassing to the general writer on ornithology and other writers that have occasion to refer to technical bird-names, and *leads to further instability*, which, I believe, is the hope of the future. When the instability reaches the stage of a general nuisance the remedy can be found in the fiat. An international commission, guided by such evidence as the R.A.O.U., B.O.U., and A.O.U. lists, &c., could frame lists of names in each group of animals, and arbitrarily make these lists the starting-point in nomenclature. If the future revealed duplication of names, it would be the province of the commission to supply the deficiency by coining new names, letting 'the dead past bury its dead.'"

From a Cambridge ornithologist (England):—"Little is known of the so-called 'International Code.' Probably the reason of the neglect is that our 'head men' in zoology won't hear of it, and are not on it. I can't say how developments may go. Ornithologists pay no attention, either, because they stick to the Stricklandian Code, or have 'gone German.' Try to keep some reasonable balance, as in the B.O.U. list."

And, lastly, one of several I have received from nearer home. A well-known doctor in New South Wales writes:—"Many thanks

for sending me a copy of your address on nomenclature. I see 'eye to eye' with you, and agree with every word you say. I congratulate you on coming out into the open and fighting against those who are carrying nomenclature to an absurdity with their slavish adherence to the fossilized 'law of priority,' and I agree with you that the cumbrous present-day system of nomenclature, with its numerous trinomial names and its unnecessary multiplication of species has done more to depopularize the study of ornithology than anything else. I hope, with you, that the R.A.O.U. will continue to retain the old Gouldian names, which are almost household names, and will not be drawn into the battle of names."

—I am, &c.,

A. J. CAMPBELL.

Surrey Hills, Victoria, 22/11/18.

WHAT ARE AUSTRALIAN SEAS ?

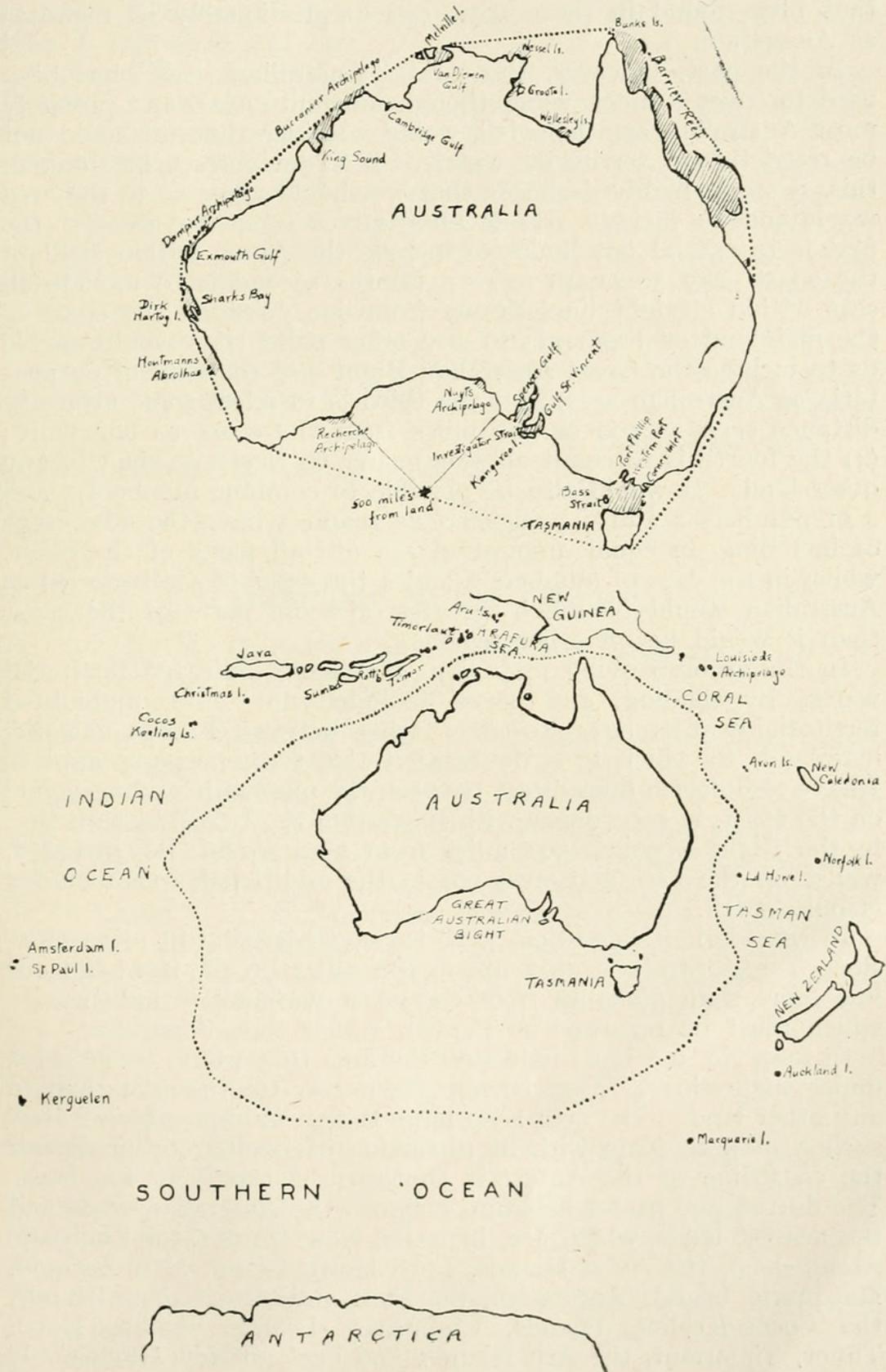
To the Editors of "The Emu."

DEAR SIRS,—As you remark in your comments, Mr. Mathews's article in *The Emu* (vol. xviii., p. 83, October, 1918), entitled "What are Australian Petrels?" is very suggestive, and I hope you can find space for the following reflections and remarks on the subject.

The obvious answer to Mr. Mathews's question is that Australian Petrels are species which occur on the Australian continent and the islands adjacent thereto and in Australian seas. It might have been supposed that some definition of these areas would have been given by those who have prepared lists of Australian birds, but, at all events in the two most recent lists—viz., the R.A.O.U. "Check-list," 1913, and Mathews's "List," 1913—no definition of the area regarded as "Australian" is given. Both these lists include the birds found in the Commonwealth—*i.e.*, Australia and Tasmania and the islands lying close to the coast—and exclude those of the dependencies of Papua, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, and Macquarie Island, so that no difficulty arises as to Australian land-birds. With regard to sea-birds, however, the case is quite different, and before we can answer Mr. Mathews's question as to "What are Australian Petrels?" we must agree as to "What are Australian Seas?"

It is well known that, according to international law, a country is regarded as owning the seas within three miles of its coast. In the case of bays and gulfs, a line is drawn from one headland to the other, and the water enclosed thereby is regarded as territorial. There can be no doubt that we are entitled to regard any Petrels found within these limits as Australian Petrels. In this category we have those species which breed on the mainland or islands off the coast, and those seen or obtained on the coast or in territorial waters. The chief areas of territorial waters on the coast of Australia are Port Phillip, Western Port, and Corner

Inlet, in Victoria; Gulf St. Vincent and Spencer Gulf, in South Australia; Sharks Bay, Exmouth Gulf, King Sound, and Cambridge Gulf, in Western Australia; together with Bass Strait



(between Victoria and Tasmania), Investigator Strait (between South Australia and Kangaroo Island), Van Diemen Gulf (between the Northern Territory and Melville Island), and the seas between the coast of Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef. I take it that birds found in these areas can unquestionably be regarded as Australian.

In the past, however, the term "Australian seas" has been used to cover a much wider though indefinite area, and probably most Australian ornithologists would consider that it should not be restricted to territorial waters. If I am correct in thinking this, it seems highly desirable that we should agree as to the area we intend to include. Four alternatives occur to me—(1) the first is to extend our limits to include the region within sight of the coast—say 30 or 40 miles; (2) the second is to include all seas within straight lines drawn from one point on the coast of the mainland or Tasmania to any other point (this would enable us to include the Great Australian Bight and the Gulf of Carpentaria as Australian seas); (3) the third is to select some arbitrary distance such as 100 or 500 miles from the coast as our limit; (4) the fourth is to count all seas nearer to Australia than to any other land. It would also be possible to combine numbers 1 and 2 or numbers 2 and 3. Suggestions 1 and 3 have the advantage of including an equal amount of sea off all parts of the coast, whilst in the case of numbers 2 and 4 the areas of sea regarded as Australian would be much greater off some parts of the coast than it would be off other regions.

In the accompanying map (No. 1) I have indicated territorial waters by shading, and have included not only undoubted territorial waters but also areas lying between islands and the mainland, to which it is doubtful if this term properly applies. I have also drawn lines direct between the most outstanding points on the coast, in accordance with suggestion 2. It will be seen that in the Bight a point 500 miles from land would be included, whilst on the east and west coasts the additional area included is only small.

In considering suggestion 3, it is worth bearing in mind that, since Torres Strait is only about 100 miles broad, if we fix our line more than 50 miles from the coast we shall include waters which must be regarded as Papuan rather than Australian.

In map No. 2 I have indicated the area that would be included under suggestion 4—that is, all seas nearer to Australia than to any other land. The area is so large that it is impossible to draw such a map to scale without distortion of familiar outlines, and the coast-line of the Antarctic continent is relatively too large. The dotted line passes half-way between the Australian coast and the nearest lands, which are, in order, New Guinea, the Louisiade Archipelago, the Avon Islands, Lord Howe Island, New Zealand, Macquarie Island, Antarctica, St. Paul and Amsterdam Islands, the Cocos-Keeling Islands, Christmas Island, Sumba, Rotti, Timor, Timorlaut, the Aru Islands, and back to New Guinea. It

will be seen that the boundary of the area included by this line is narrowest in Torres Strait, where it is only 50 miles from the coast, and widest off Cape Leeuwin, where it is probably at least 1,500 miles away. Between these points the breadth of sea included increases fairly regularly, being broader on the south and west than in the north and east.

I raised this question at the annual general meeting of the R.A.O.U., and those present seemed inclined to agree with me that the fourth suggestion was the most satisfactory. Under this suggestion we may define "Australian seas" as "all those portions of the ocean nearer to Australia and Tasmania than to any other country." If this definition is agreed upon we shall be in a position to discuss the validity of records of the occurrence of various Petrels in "Australian seas," but without a definition of this term discussion would be profitless.

There are other points arising out of Mr. Mathews's article that I should like to discuss, but as I fear you will be unable to find space for a longer letter I will defer them to a future occasion.

W. B. ALEXANDER.

Queen's College, Melbourne, 5/12/18.

Additions to the Library.

By W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A., HON. LIBRARIAN.

DONATIONS.

- "The Food of Australian Birds." New South Wales Department of Agriculture Science Bulletin No. 15.
"Some Considerations on Sight in Birds." J. C. Lewis. (Reprinted from the Smithsonian Report for 1916.)
"Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club: Easter Camp-Out, 1918."
"Birds from Pauai and Mount Pulog, Sub-Province of Benguet, Luzon." R. C. M'Gregor, Bureau of Science, Manila.
"Flinders Chase: a Reserve for Fauna and Flora." S. A. White.
"Ooldea, on the East-West Railway; On the Flooded Murray River; and Other Sketches." S. A. White.

EXCHANGES.

- Victorian Naturalist*, vol. xxxv., part 4.
British Birds, vol. xii., parts 1 and 3.
University of California Publications in Zoology, vol. xvii., part 18; vol. xviii., parts 15 and 16.
Hawkesbury Agricultural College Journal, vol. xv., part 9.
Ibis, vol. vi., part 3.
Auk, vol. xxxv., part 3.
Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, vol. xliii., part 2.
Condor, vol. xx., part 4.



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