

they visited the sea coasts and accounted for great numbers of star-fishes, which were known to prey upon oysters and whelks.

Mr. Gerald Hill said that he was very pleased to inspect such an interesting exhibit of skins, especially as some of them were very familiar to him. He stated that, whilst it is somewhat difficult to distinguish between Letter-winged and Black-shouldered Kites when at rest, when on the wing it is quite a simple matter.

Mr. Chubb called attention to the fact that the immature Kites were marked as to their sex, and said that in very young birds he had found it impossible to ascertain the sex. He wondered how Mr. Jackson had accomplished the feat. Other members testified as to the same difficulty with young birds.

Extracts were read from South Australian newspapers by the chairman, in which it was stated that Mr. Mathews's collection of bird skins was under offer to the South Australian Museum, and that to enable it to be purchased another £6,000 would have to be found. Several members expressed painful surprise that after the various State Governments had given permission for Mr. Mathews to procure skins of our birds to enable him to produce his work, and also that, as so many valuable skins had been presented to Mr. Mathews by Australian ornithologists, it should be necessary for Australia to buy this collection back again. It seemed possible also that if the money could not be raised the collection would be offered elsewhere. The types, at any rate, of Australian birds should certainly be Australian property, or at least lodged in Australia; yet it seemed possible that, as in the case of the Gouldian collection, they might be lost to us.

It was arranged that Mr. F. E. Wilson should furnish an account of the monthly conversaziones for *The Emu*.

Review.

"JUNGLE PEACE."

["Jungle Peace," by William Beebe, Curator of Birds, New York Zoological Park, and Director of Tropical Research Station. Illustrated from photographs. New York: Henry Holt and Co. Price, 1.75 dols. net.]

"Of making many books there is no end," but no book made is like Mr. Beebe's "Jungle Peace." Mr. Beebe is known to Australians as an eminent ornithologist, and his society subscribes to *The Emu*, but they may not know that he had been an aviator in the Great World War, or that he has such an artistic and convincing way of writing his knowledge and observations gained in the field. Facts, especially nature facts, are often stranger than fiction, and it has not been overstated when a reviewer says Mr. Beebe's style "has a magic which transforms fact." So it is with his field observations in the jungles of British Guiana. The

"Peace Jungle" is especially interesting to Australians, being particularly reminiscent of the great green "scrubs" of tropical Queensland, with trees majestic and massive, some strange and beautiful and some with "lichen-sculptured trunks," springing from the rich red soil, with the verdant roof of interlacing foliage one hundred to two hundred feet overhead; then there are liana loops and tangles in mid-air; palms and ferns below; decorations of tree orchids, white convolvuli, and even red passiflora; lotus-lily lagoons, &c.; and tenanted with creatures in keeping: rare and glorious birds, curious mammals, huge snakes, tree-frogs with "vacuum-cupped toes," ants—stinging ants that attack with "both ends of their anatomy"; singing cicadas and alligators that "roar"; beautiful butterflies, &c.; and there are mentioned "tomatoes no larger than cherries," *Bougainvillea* blooms, fragrant frangipani, cocoanut palms, and similar introductions, as also seen in northern Australia.

There are, suggestive of the wet season, clouds that "bank up about mid-day, and showers descend with true tropical violence," and a consequent clammy climate that one gets used to. Mr. Beebe not only mentions all these, but more, and takes the reader with him in his outings, whether it be by night in the jungle, full of eerie sounds, or by day along the trail (track) like a tunnel cut through a wilderness of wood. The author has caught the spirit of the scrub, with its peculiar scenes, sounds, and scents, which he so graphically describes. Read the first chapter of "Jungle Peace," and you irresistibly read right on to the end, and fancy you have indeed visited the great "highbush" of Guiana. Hear about Humming-Birds when four cashew trees became inflorescent in a blaze of cerise:—

"The next few days made the trees ever memorable; they were the Mecca of all the Humming-Birds in the jungle. In early morning the air for many yards resounded with a dull droning as of a swarming of giant bees. Standing or sitting under the tree, we could detect the units of this host, and then the individuals forced themselves on our notice. Back and forth the hummers swooped and swung, now poising in front of a mass of blossom and probing deeply among the stamens, now dashing off at a tangent, squeaking or chattering their loudest. The magnitude of the total sound made by these feathered atoms was astounding; piercing squeaks, shrill insect-like tones, and now and then a real song, diminutive trills and warbles as if from a flock of song-birds a long distance away. Combats and encounters were frequent—some mere sparring bouts, while, when two would go at it in earnest, their humming and squeaks and throb of wings were audible above the general noise. . . Day after day, as we watched this kaleidoscope of vegetable and avian hues, we came to know more intimately the units which formed the mass. There were at least fifteen species, and all had peculiarities of flight and plumage so marked that they soon became recognizable at sight." "Another day," says Mr. Beebe, "I observed closely for an hour, and counted one hundred and forty-six Humming-Birds coming to the tree. During the day at least one thousand must visit it."



Major (Dr.) W. Macgillivray, Tenth President R.A.O.U.

We have read of the "flora of a single tree." Here is the avifauna of a single tree—a tall, slender wild cinnamon tree ("canella" of the natives), which Mr. Beebe observed on the Amazon, and noted in a chapter sandwiched in his Guiana jungle matter. The tree was twiggy and laden with a wonderful harvest of brownish berries:—

"From daybreak to dark the canella tree was seldom deserted. Usually a score or more of birds fluttered and fed amongst its branches. In the few hours I was able to devote to its study I identified seventy-six different kinds, and, together with those which I saw but could not name, I judged that more than a hundred species must have come to the berries during that week in early May. The first day I secured sixteen specimens, all different; and the following day yielded fourteen more, only one of which was a duplicate of the first day's results." (Here follow names and habits of same.)

We congratulate Mr. Beebe on his unique book on nature. We sometimes hear the expression, "the fortunes of war." In the Great War just concluded it was our good fortune to have the United States of America as an ally; therefore we claim Mr. Beebe as one of ourselves. Moreover, he writes in our language and speaks our mother tongue. It is a happy coincidence, too, that this book, with its title, "Peace"—even the "Peace of the Jungle"—should synchronize with the end of the dreadful war.

Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union.

THE annual meeting of the Union was held at No. 2 Temple Court, Melbourne, on 4th December, 1918, at 7.30 p.m.

There were present:—Col. G. Horne (in the chair), Messrs. W. B. Alexander, A. J. Campbell, R. H. Croll, Z. Gray, H. E. Hurst, W. H. D. Le Souëf, H. W. Ford, A. H. E. Mattingley, F. Keep, G. Hill, A. C. Stone, A. Wilkie, F. Tregellas, J. A. Ross, Dr. B. Nicholls, Miss H. Bowie, Capt. H. L. Cochrane.

ANNUAL REPORT.

The Council has much pleasure in presenting to the members of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union its Eighteenth Annual Report.

Thirty-four of our members are still at the front, and all honour to them! We deeply regret that four—probably five—in addition, have given their lives during the past year, namely:—Reginald Hutchinson, Victoria; A. M'Kenzie Kirkwood, Victoria; Maurice Thompson, Victoria; R. H. M. Eltis, Victoria; and G. Arnold Young, Queensland (missing for over a year).

At the conclusion of the war an honour board will be erected in the Union's room, so that the names of the brave men who have obeyed their country's call will be handed down to posterity.

Seven members have resigned during the year. Sixteen members



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