

Wilson's Promontory (Vic.) and its Wild Life.

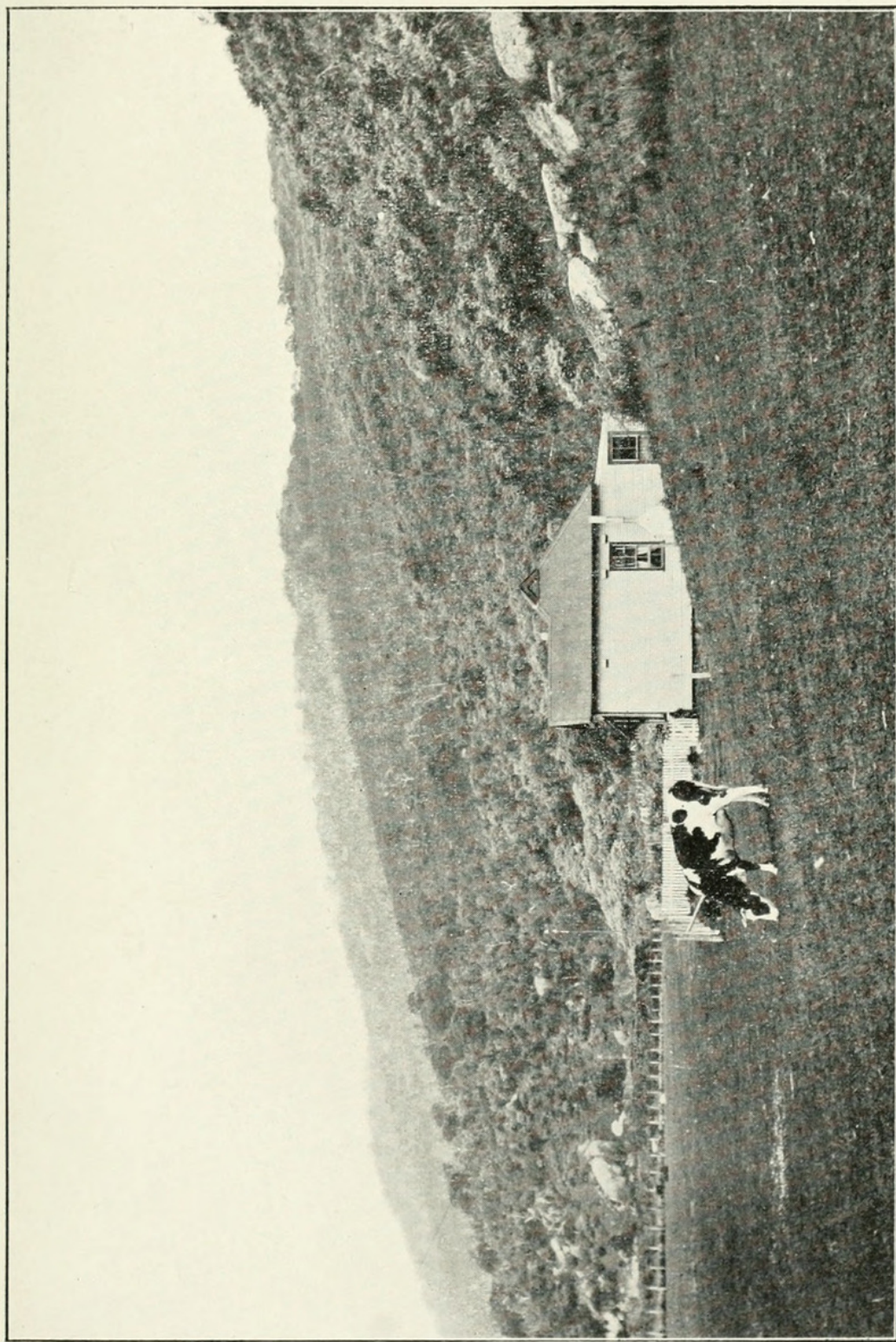
BY CHARLES BARRETT, C.M.Z.S., HISTORICAL BRANCH, DEFENCE DEPARTMENT, MELBOURNE.

WHEN Surgeon George Bass, in his whale-boat, sailed into Sealers' Cove on 24th January, 1798, his desire was to win food from the land; but, going ashore, he was charmed by a medley of bird-songs—liquid notes of the Shrike-Thrush, carolling of Magpies, and the slender strains of Fantails and Wrens, happy at their day's employ. Bass was not on a sentimental journey; to replenish his larder he took toll of bird-life, but surely none of the songsters was shot. In his diary the navigator paid a tribute to the sweetness of the bird music that greeted him on Wilson's Promontory; and, for nature-lovers, his praise is the pleasantest thing in the story of that immortal voyage through the strait that bears his name.

In July, 1908, the greater part of Wilson's Promontory (approximately 101,000 acres) was permanently reserved as a National Park—a sanctuary for native fauna and flora, which, elsewhere in the State, is disappearing before the advance of civilization. A more suitable area (excluding all country that is fit for settlement) could not have been chosen. The Promontory, connected with the mainland by an isthmus about 14 miles in length and 4 miles in width, includes "samples" of several types of country, and is capable of supporting many species of birds, mammals, &c., in great numbers, while the indigenous flora comprises more than 600 species. The scenic beauty of the Park is equal to that of any coastal or mountain district in Victoria, and compares favourably with that of national parks in other States. Commercially, the country is almost valueless. There are some good grazing areas, and a few hundred head of cattle are generally pastured in the Park; but most of the land is unsuited for stock, and the timber on the ranges is of little worth.

At one time probably an island, geologists say, the Promontory now forms portion of the ruins of an ancient land-bridge between Australia and Tasmania. It is a wild, mountainous region, with beautiful fern gullies, sylvan creeks, and little rivers, wide, curved beaches, granitic headlands, high sand-dunes, and stretches of open, "heathy" country, that are splendid with flowers in springtime and summer. There are vast swamps, too, and dark morasses which it is perilous to explore.

The Park may be reached either by land or sea. Most visitors travel by rail to Foster, 107 miles from Melbourne, on the South-Eastern (Gippsland) railway, thence by road to the coast at Shallow Inlet, where the beach journey begins—first through clinging sand, then firmer going along the outer beach, past long "blows" misty with wind-driven sand and rugged headlands that are impassable at high tide. The "turn in" is where the Darby River flows from between low cliffs to the sea. The road is hedged with tea-tree (*Leptospermum*) to the entrance gate, beside



A Scene near the Darby River, National Park, Victoria.

PHOTO. BY CHAS. BARRETT, C.M.Z.S.

a railed bridge. A wide green flat lies before you; the wine-dark river that mirrors a mountain and comes from dreary swamp-land; high hills clad in trees and shrubs—snowed under by blossom in early summer; and two cottages, but a neighbourly distance apart, sheltering in their shadows. One is the dwelling of the Park committee of management during visits of inspection, the other the ranger's home. Near the white gateway, safe from the winds that blow, with the accompaniment of drenching rain, on too many days of the year, is the rest-house for tourists—a two-roomed building, with bunks, a table and chairs, and a big open fireplace. Miles away, on Barry's Hill, stands another ranger's cottage.

Much has been done for the pleasure and comfort of tourists. There are good bridle-tracks (with guide-boards where needed) to the "lions" of the Park; to Sealers' Cove, to Lilly-pilly Gully, Oberon Bay, and many another place of rare beauty. The Park Committee has earned praise by what has been accomplished, and it has plans for the future that should gain it more. Lack of funds has delayed the carrying out of these schemes of improvement, which include the erection, in the vicinity of the Darby River, of an accommodation house for tourists, and a large enclosure near the entrance, where they could see representatives of all the native animals that have been established in the Park.

The Park is well guarded. Mr. W. J. Cripps, the chief ranger, is zealous in performing his duties. With his son he is out in all weathers, on patrol, cutting tracks, inspecting the boundary fence, and watching the wild creatures in his charge. He knows the domain from range to sea; is a keen observer, and a good bushman. He has been guide to many tourists, taking them along steep seaward tracks, across the ranges, over the "Bad Saddle" into Oberon Bay, and through the wonderful gullies of the south-west.

A week's wandering in the National Park, if you are in the saddle each day from dawn till dusk, gives an impression—an outline sketch—of its beauties; but a month, at least, is needed to visit all the spots worth seeing between the Darby and the lighthouse on South-East Point. Besides, there are islands—Bennison, Shellback, the Glennies, Anser Group, and others. The beaches of Norman and Oberon Bays will become famed among surfers. In beauty they rival those of Bondi and Coogee, though some hold that the surf at Sydney's resorts gives finer sport. Corner Basin shore is not for bathers; a vast mud-flat at low tide, overgrown by Spurious Mangroves (*Avicenna officinalis*), with granite rocks here and there. This is the home of little mangrove crabs (*Helæcius cordiformis*); they patrol the mud in millions, but, alarmed, disappear in a second down holes among the mangroves.

Coast scenery along the south-west is incomparable. From a hill-top near the Darby, reached by an easy track from the flat, one wins a vision of barren grey isles set in blue sea; of scrub-clad slopes, and red-brown boulders fringed with foam. Inland,

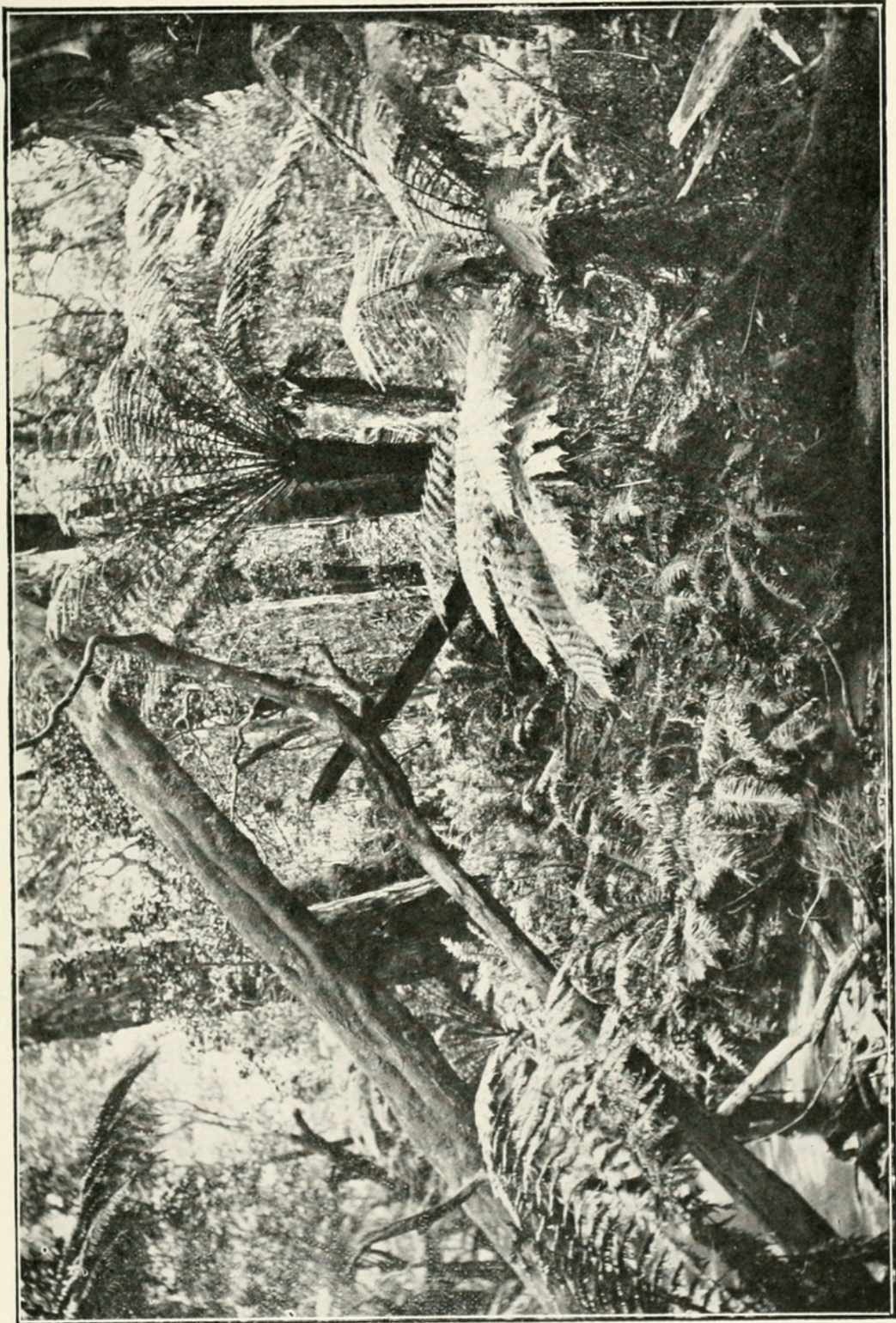
purple ranges, misty against a tranquil sky or wreathed in storm clouds. Both in weather and scenery the Park offers infinite variety. Nature has a vast canvas for her pictures, and she paints them in the grand style, in her placid and stormy moods; but she is rarely long content with an effect, and sweeps it away for another. A summer morning may come with a rain storm, and within an hour or two there will be clear sky and a wind that barely swings the bluebell on its stem. Then storm again—a gale that uproots dead trees on the mountain-side, and makes it perilous to travel on the track to Sealers' Cove. Not long ago a small building on the isthmus was torn down, and, they say, blown out to sea! The dunes and the flat-topped bushes on the moorland bear witness to the power of the wind. And yet, in the year, there are many perfect days.

Oberon Bay, whose hinterland is fair country for cattle, is the pride of the Promontory. A shelving beach, with the curve of beauty, blue sea laced with foam, and wild splendour of granite hills. After storm there are shells to be gathered on the white sand; cones and cowries, the delicate pinna, and a host of others—nearly 60 kinds have been recorded from the Bay. The rock pools, at low tide, yield a rich harvest. The shore is haunted by birds. Sea-Gulls patrol the shallows; Dottrel twinkle over the sand; and Oyster-catchers paddle in the shallows, their plaintive notes mingling with the ceaseless song of the surf. The gullies, thick with tea-tree, are thronged with honey-eating birds. Through park-like country, dotted with Banksias, Fraser's Creek flows to the sea. Here is a good spot for camping, for the creek water is sweet and clear, and a tent can be pitched in the shade of spreading boughs.

Lilly-pilly Gully, discovered by the ranger, has recently been made accessible to tourists. One of the finest gullies in Victoria, save for a slender track and a string of blazed trees it remains a place of faery. When the sea is leaping on Oberon's flanks, and wind rushing over the tall trees on Bishop Rock, only a musical murmur, and the wandering cries of birds, echo amid the ferns. A little creek flows along a sandy bed, overarched by musk and myrtle, a mirror for drooping fronds. Hardy ferns carpet the forest floor, mingled with myrtle seedlings, clumps of sword-grass, and jungles of shrubs and creepers. Where the track winds into the gully a cascade of white Clematis and delicate Tecoma flowers veils the foliage of many trees. From hot sunshine you pass into cool and fragrant shade. No fire (though the neighbouring hills have been swept) has ravished this gully, perhaps for centuries.

Lyre-Birds (*Menura victoriae*) live in the heart of the gully. Often they are heard mocking the notes of other birds or uttering their own; but rarely is one seen. The Park may become the last refuge of *Menura*, which has small chance, elsewhere, against the fox and the plume-hunter and ruthless egg-collectors.

An hour's ride from the Darby, in a hollow beyond the Red



Lilly-pilly Gully, National Park, Wilson's Promontory, Victoria.

PHOTO. BY CHAS. BARRETT, C.M.Z.S.

Hill, is swamp land, dotted with gums, rising from a generous growth of water-loving plants. This is the home of the Park's koalas (*Phascolarctus cinereus*). Nearly every tree has its tenants. Some years ago the koalas, which had become so numerous that they had to be "thinned out," migrated from their headquarters at Oberon Bay to their present retreat, because the food supply had failed. They had, by continuous feeding, killed the swamp gums at the Bay, and had to move on or starve. By common consent they sought fresh fields, and, despite the ravages of disease last winter, are a flourishing community. Kangaroos (two species) and wallabies (five species) are also increasing, the latter being particularly abundant.

Two visits to Wilson's Promontory (the last in October, 1919) have enabled me to glean some notes regarding its bird-life. My own list includes about 60 species, but I missed many that have been seen by other observers. Yet the Park is not as rich in birds as one could wish it to be. Some species—the Crimson Parrot (*Platycercus pennanti*), for example—are abundant; others are rare. Several species have been introduced—namely, the Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*), the Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriae*), the Mallee-Fowl (*Leipoa ocellata*), and the Satin Bower-Bird (*Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus*). All appear to be thriving. I was delighted to find the Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*) almost as abundant as the Blue Wren (*Malurus cyaneus*), and to learn that the Ground-Parrot (*Pezoporus formosus*) is occasionally flushed from the heath land by the sea. Along the beaches I noted many familiar sea-birds, and saw an Osprey (*Pandion leucocephalus*) soaring over a granite headland.

In Lilly-pilly Gully the Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) and the Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon galeatum*) are, at times, numerous; possibly they nest in the dead trees that crown high peaks on the Promontory.

The Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*) is not uncommon in the tea-tree swamps, and Pilot-Birds (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*) are abundant in the bush near Sealers' Cove. Mountain slopes and valleys, on the south-western side, that I "explored" in October, were clothed in tea-tree. It was blossom time, and Honey-eaters of several species were feasting in thousands. The Crescent Honey-eater (*Lichmera australasiana*) was dominant, and its sharp call, "E—gypt," echoed from every bush and tree. In the Banksias (*B. serrata* and *B. integrifolia*) Wattle-Birds (*Acanthochæra carunculata*) were feeding noisily. It was pleasant to linger in these places; to watch the birds darting from tree to tree, or clinging, often head downward, to slender twigs while they rifled the flowers. Once, on a small tree, I saw three birds—two Crescent Honey-eaters and a White-cheeked (*Meliornis sericea*)—perched in a row, each on the tip of a swaying spray. A valley near the ranger's cottage, on Darby River flat, was the headquarters of the Honey-eaters; they were numerous as Sparrows at dusk in a suburban hedgerow. Seated in shadow

on a knoll, for an hour I watched the birds through my field-glasses. It was a rare experience for one who counts a bird in the bush of more value than a score in the cabinet. That shining company of wild birds displayed no fear of me; perchance they were unaware of an intruder, for some flew over and around me, and others sang from the shrub by the knoll that formed my seat. I seemed to be in a great aviary rather than on a hill slope within sound of the sea. This is an impression, deeply etched in memory, of bird-life in Victoria's National Park; it is the best of many.

Appended is a list of birds that have been recorded from Wilson's Promontory, with some notes, chiefly on species observed during my recent visit to the Park:—

Emu (*Dromaius novæ-hollandiæ*).—Introduced. Now about 60 birds. Broods are reared each year, but, so far, a nest has not been discovered. In the course of an afternoon's ramble I saw about a score of Emus, including a female with five young birds, which were about six weeks old. Some of the birds were remarkably tame, others forbade a near approach. All were in perfect plumage. Two young birds, reared in the Park some years ago, were so tame that they would take food from the ranger's hand long after they had been liberated from the "home paddock."

Stubble-Quail (*Coturnix pectoralis*).—Fairly common.

Brown Quail (*Synoicus australis*).—Fairly numerous.

Brush Bronze-winged Pigeon (*Phaps elegans*).—Said to be abundant at times.

Black Moor-Hen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*).

Bald-Coot (*Porphyrio melanonotus*).

Australian Coot (*Fulica australis*).

Great Grebe (*Podiceps australis*).

Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*).

Allied Petrel (*Puffinus assimilis*).

Cape Petrel (*Daption capensis*).

White-capped Albatross (*Diomedea cauta*).

Silver Gull (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*).—Observed on nearly all the beaches; numerous in some bays.

Pacific Gull (*Gabianus pacificus*).—A common species.

Pied Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus longirostris*).—Pairs seen on all the beaches. Nests along the dunes.

Black Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus fuliginosus*).—Less abundant than *H. longirostris*.

Spur-winged Plover (*Lobivanellus lobatus*).—Frequently heard calling at night, near the Darby River.

Black-fronted Dottrel (*Ægialitis nigrifrons*).—Abundant on the shore in all the bays.

Australian Curlew (*Numenius cyanopus*).—Seen only on the beach in Shallow Inlet; fairly numerous.

Australian Snipe (*Gallinago australis*).

Southern Stone-Curlew (*Ædicnemus grallarius*).

White Ibis (*Ibis molucca*).—Introduced. On Darby River.

Straw-necked Ibis (*Carphibis spinicollis*).—Introduced. Darby River.

White-fronted Heron (*Notophoyx novæ-hollandiæ*).—In pairs about the swamps. Large flocks along the coast, flying over or perched on rocky headlands. A Magpie, whose mate was nesting in a tree on

the hill slopes, repeatedly attacked a Heron, though it was hundreds of yards from the nest.

Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*).

Black Swan (*Chenopsis atrata*).—Large flocks feeding in Shallow Inlet. They are said to nest in the vicinity.

Cape Barren Goose (*Cereopsis novæ-hollandiæ*).

Australian Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*).—Fairly numerous, during portion of the year, on the Darby River; also seen on swamp water near Red Hill.

Grey Teal (*Nettion gibberifrons*).

Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*).

White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*).

Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*).

Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).—Seen on Darby River and along the coast.

White-breasted Cormorant (*P. gouldi*).—Not uncommon.

Gannet (*Sula australis*).

Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*).

Spotted Swamp-Hawk (*Circus assimilis*).

Allied Swamp-Hawk (*C. gouldi*).

Collared Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter torquatus*).

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*).

White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliæetus leucogaster*).—Several of these birds were seen, soaring high over granite headlands. There is an eyrie on Barry's Hill, and, possibly, another on the extremity of Tongue Point, which is timbered.

Black-cheeked Falcon (*Falco melanogenys*).

Brown Hawk (*Hieracidea berigora*).

Nankeen Kestrel (*Cerchneis cenchroides*).—Noted in several localities, often soaring over the sea.

White-headed Osprey (*Pandion leucocephalus*).

Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*).

Blue-bellied Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus swainsoni*).—Flocks seen flying over Darby River swamp.

Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*).—Numerous. Flocks observed at Lilly-pilly Gully. Probably nests among the dead timber on some of the mountains.

Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon galeatum*).—Fairly numerous; six birds seen at Lilly-pilly Gully.

White Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*).—Abundant. Dead eucalypts in a swamp outside the Park boundary form a roosting-place for the birds. Two were constant visitors to the green flat of the Darby; they fed close to the ranger's cottage.

King Parrot (*Aprosmictus scapulatus*).

Crimson Parrot (*Platycercus pennanti*).—Common everywhere—inland and among the coastal scrub.

Grass-Parrot (*Euphema elegans*).

Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*).

Ground-Parrot (*Pezoporus formosus*).—Has frequently been flushed on "heathy" country along the coast, and must nest in the Park.

Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*).

Great Brown Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigas*).—Not uncommon.

Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*).

White-rumped Swift (*Cypselus pacificus*).

Spine-tailed Swift (*Chætura caudacuta*).

Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*).—Fairly numerous.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*).—Frequently seen and heard.

Narrow-billed Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcococcyx basalis*).

Bronze-Cuckoo (*C. plagosus*).

Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriæ*).—Introduced. Established in Lillypilly Gully.

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*).—Abundant, hawking over the swamps and river flats.

Fairy Martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*).

Tree-Martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*).—Common.

Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascians*).

Scarlet-breasted Robin (*Petroica leggit*).

Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas bicolor*).

Yellow-breasted Shrike-Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*).

Yellow-breasted Whistler (*Pachycephala gutturalis*).

Rufous-breasted Whistler (*P. rufiventris*).

Olive Whistler (*P. olivacea*).

White-shafted Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*).

Rufous-fronted Fantail (*R. rufifrons*).

Black-and-White Fantail (*R. motacilloides*).

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus melanops*).

Pilot-Bird (*Pycnopsilus floccosus*).

Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*).—Frequently heard; nesting in tea-tree swamp near the Darby River.

Ground-Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata*).—Dead specimen found near Darby River; probably killed by striking telephone wire. Many birds suffer a similar fate, flying headlong against the barbed wire of the boundary fence.

White-fronted Bush-Chat (*Ephthianura albifrons*).

Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*).

Little Grass-Bird (*Megalurus gramineus*).

Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola sagittata*).

Yellow-tailed Tit-Warbler (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*).—In flocks along the Red Hill road and other localities.

Striated Tit-Warbler (*A. lineata*).

Brown Tit-Warbler (*A. pusilla*).—Nesting in tea-tree along tracks on Darby hills.

White-browed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis frontalis*).

Blue Wren-Warbler (*Malurus cyaneus*).—Plentiful; nesting in bushes behind the Committee's cottage.

Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).—Abundant in many parts of the Park.

Wood-Swallow (*Artamus sordidus*).—An abundant species.

Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*).

Pied Grallina (*Grallina picata*).

White-eye (*Zosterops dorsalis*).

Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*).

Red-tipped Pardalote (*P. striatus*).

White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunulatus*).

Sanguineous Honey-eater (*Myzomela sanguinolenta*).

Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*).

White-fronted Honey-eater (*Glyciphila albifrons*).

White-eared Honey-eater (*Ptilotis leucotis*).

Regent Honey-eater (*Meliphaga phrygia*).

Crescent Honey-eater (*Lichmera australasiana*).

White-bearded Honey-eater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*).

White-cheeked Honey-eater (*M. sericea*).

Red Wattle-Bird (*Anthochaera carunculata*).

Brush Wattle-Bird (*Anellobia mellivora*).

Pipit (*Anthus australis*).—Numerous, especially on Darby River flat.

Red-browed Finch (*Egintha temporalis*).—Flocks in scrub along coast.

Satin Bower-Bird (*Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus*).—Introduced.

Crow (*Corvus coronoides*).—Fairly numerous.

Grey Bell-Magpie (*Strepera anaphonensis*).

Collared Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus destructor*).

White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina leuconota*).

Crested Penguins in Western Australia.

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THE first record of the occurrence of a Crested Penguin in Western Australia was made by A. J. Campbell in 1889. He stated that a specimen had been captured at Hamelin Harbour, near Cape Leeuwin. Subsequently, in *The Emu* (vol. ix., p. 92, 1909), C. P. Conigrave recorded the capture, on Rottnest Island, of a specimen, now in the Western Australian Museum.

Recently the Museum has received from Mr. A. Muir Ferrier another specimen, which was captured on Middleton Beach, Albany, by C. E. Muir, in 1896.

It has been usual to refer all specimens of Crested Penguins obtained in Australian seas to *Eudyptes chrysocome*, Forster, and A. F. Basset Hull has recently published an interesting account of the local history of this species (*Records Australian Mus.*, xii., No. 6, Sept., 1918). Curiously enough, the president of the R.A.O.U. seems to have entirely overlooked G. M. Mathews's remarks on these birds published in *The Emu*, vol. xvi., p. 184, January, 1917.

In that paper Mathews had indicated that two species had been recorded from Australia under the name of *chrysocome*—a larger, which he calls *E. pachyrhynchus*, Gray, and a smaller, *E. serresianus*, Oustalet. The differences between these two species are given, and it is stated that it is difficult to attach the existing records of Penguins in Australian waters. The majority are believed by Mathews to be referable to *E. pachyrhynchus*, Gray, including the type of *E. chrysocome*, Forster, from Tasmania. Since Forster's name was published in 1781 and Gray's in 1845, it is difficult to understand how Gray's name can supersede Forster's; but Mathews states that the matter has been "fully developed in *The Ibis*." A search through the pages of *The Ibis* fails to reveal the article referred to.

The two birds in this Museum are very different in appearance, the Albany specimen having a beautiful double drooping crest of black and straw-coloured feathers, whilst the Rottnest bird is



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