

on insects and caterpillars on the acacia trees, and were searching the fresh young foliage at the tips of the branches.

Buff-bellied Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla rufiventris*).—This species was fairly plentiful on the Porongorups. I heard what was probably this species at Ooldea, but the only bird I saw for a moment had a dark brown chest and abdomen, similar to that of *C. woodwardi*.

Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*).—Whitefaces were numerous in the open country round Ooldea; they were very tame.

Rufous Tree-creeper (*Climacteris rufa*).—The Rufous Tree-creeper was numerous on the Porongorups, where their habits were somewhat different from those of the eastern birds in that they fed high on the trunks of the large trees. I did not see one fly to the base of a tree and run up, as the Brown Tree-creeper (*C. scandens*) does. One specimen alighted on a large dead eucalypt about 100 feet up, and started his upward run from there.

White-browed Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus superciliosus*).—A fair number of this Spinebill was seen on the Porongorups. They are much quieter, less demonstrative, and have weaker notes than has the eastern bird.

Brown Honey-eater (*Stigmatops ocularis*).—I was glad to hear this cheerful songster at Mr. M'Kenzie Grant's station near Geraldton. It was singing with its Reed-Warbler note in exactly the same way as we heard it at Stradbroke Island, Queensland, last year.

Bush-Lark (*Mirafra horsfieldi*).—This bird was very numerous in the vicinity of Geraldton. One often saw small flocks of them fly up from the fields and roadside.

FORGOTTEN FEATHERS.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, C.M.B.O.U.

[Read at Perth Session R.A.O.U., 20/10/20.]

It is stated that in 1843 Gray, Gould, and Strickland examined the Watling drawings,* not knowing their origin, except that they were formerly in the possession of a Mr. A. B. Lambert and afterwards became the property of the Earl of Derby. There were three volumes, or about 300 painted pictures, depicting Australian birds. The set was finally bequeathed to the British Museum.

In "Notes on Australian Artists," by William Dixon (*Journal*

* In his entertaining chapter on the Winking Owl (*Ninox connivens*), "Birds of Australia," vol. v., p. 338, in reference to the mysterious "Watling Drawings" and discussions by various writers thereon, Gregory M. Mathews says:—"Of course, the action of the above writers (meaning North and Campbell) was due to prejudice and ignorance of the drawings and their history." I called them the crude drawings of a "botanist." Now it appears that Mathews has himself possibly missed the original history of the drawings. Who was Watling?

and *Proceedings Royal Australian Hist. Soc.*, v., part 5, Sydney, 1919), it is stated:—"Thomas Watling, according to his own story, was convicted by a Scotch jury and sentenced to transportation. He was sent out in the *Pitt*, which sailed from England early in July, 1791. He escaped at the Cape, was recaptured after a month, and kept in prison for seven months waiting a ship. He was sent on in the *Royal Admiral*, which left the Cape on 30th August, 1792, and arrived in Sydney 7th October, 1792." Watling himself wrote afterwards, presumably to some friend in England:—"My employment is painting for J. W——, Esqre., the nondescript production of the country."

Between three and four years after Watling's enforced arrival at Sydney, or on 16th January, 1796, there was a theatrical performance given at The Cove, and no doubt a person of Watling's artistic temperament would be in the limited company. The celebrated "prologue" included the couplet—

"True patriots we, for be it understood
We left our country for our country's good."

Now, I am going to take this utterance as a prophecy literally fulfilled in our days so far as Watling is concerned, and to show what he has done "for *his* country's good" in the earliest days of ornithology, particularly as the astute Dr. John Latham used (without stating where he obtained his originals) the batch of Watling drawings, so many of which became "types" for Latham's species of Australian birds, and consequently the names in use to-day in our "Check-list." Of course, in the limited time at our disposal I cannot mention every one, but will cull a few observations from a volume by Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe on "Birds of the British Museum,"* for which I am indebted for loan by our ever-faithful friend and member, Mr. D. Le Souëf.

Dr. Sharpe, in his opening remarks, writes:—"Of additional interest to Latham's published works, which give us an idea of the contents of the bird-cases in the British Museum in the latter half of the 18th century, is the naming of certain Australian birds in the 'Supplements' to the 'Synopsis' and to the 'Index Ornithologicus.' Up to the present time it has never been known where Latham obtained the material for describing so many Australian—or, as they were then called, 'New Holland'—birds.

"In 1902 the Museum acquired from Mr. James Lee, a grandson of the famous horticulturist of Hammersmith, a large volume of paintings executed for the latter by one of his collectors, Thomas Watling, between 1788 and 1792. These drawings had evidently been shown to Latham, who named most of the birds, and seems to have referred to these pictures as 'Mr. Lambert's drawings.' They do not seem, however, to have been Lambert's property at any time."

Dr. Sharpe further mentions that a Mr. James Britten, who

* History of the collections contained in the Natural History Department of the British Museum (for review see *Emu*, vol. vii., p. 193).

examined the series of drawings, and who, writing to the *Journ. Botany*, xl., p. 302 (1902) stated that "Watling was sent out by James Lee, of Hammersmith (from whose great grandson, bearing the same name, the collection was published), with a view to obtaining material for a book on the natural history of the country." This is obviously a mistake. So is the year 1788 above mentioned; Watling did not reach Australia until 1792.*

Picture No. 9 (an Owl) is the type of *Ninox connivens* (*Falco connivens*, Lath.) Latham does not acknowledge the origin of his descriptions, but copies the substance of Watling's MS., which gives the native name as "Goo-ree-a-gang," and that "this bird has a wonderful power of contracting and dilating the iris and pupil."

10. "New Falcon," *Erythrotriorchis radiatus* (*Falco radiatus*, Lath.)—Watling's note:—"This bird measures, from the top of the head to the end of the tail, 22 in., and from the tip of one wing to the other 4 feet. Iris doubtful. A new Falcon."

11. Another painting of Radiated Falcon, with Watling's note:—"The skin of this bird I found nailed up to a settler's hut. It is the only one of the kind ever seen. This drawing is a faithful copy. The settler who shot it says the iris was brown, and remarked that he never saw any bird fly with such swiftness. Its claws, which were long, small, and sharp, when he took it up, it drove quite through the end of his fingers. A new Falcon. This bird measures, from bill to extremity of the tail, 24 inches." Latham copied the notes, but did not say who wrote them.

24. Boobook Owl (*Strix boobook*, Lath.)—Figure is the type. Watling's note:—"This bird is about the size of the common English Owl. Native name, 'Boo-book.'"

27. Butcher-Bird (*Lanius torquatus*, Lath.)—Type of *Cracticus torquatus*, although Dr. Sharpe observes it has been generally referred to *C. destructor*, which name becomes a synonym. Watling's note:—"This drawing is about the natural size."

57. *Scythrops novæ-hollandiæ*, Lath. (Channelbill).—Watling notes the native name is "Goe-re-e-gang." Then follow lengthy observations, finishing with:—"I had a wounded bird two days alive, but could not get it to eat; it bit everything that approached it very severely." Latham transferred the note to his "General History," attributing the story of the wounded bird to a "Mr. White."

58. Type of the Black-faced Graucalus (*Corvus melanops*, Lath.)—Watling's observation:—"Natural size. This is a bird of prey. The native name, 'Kai-a-lora.'"

* Mr. A. H. Chisholm, R.A.O.U., Brisbane, who also contributed some remarks on this subject, concludes thus:—"White's (Surgeon-General John) *Journal* was printed in 1790, and all the plates were dated 29th Dec., 1789. Accordingly, if Mr. Dixon's dates are correct, the Museum was wrong in stating that Watling executed some of the drawings in White's *Journal*, just as it appears to have been wrong in stating that he was sent out by James Lee. It seems certain, however, that Watling executed many delineations (both paintings and rough sketches) of Australian birds and flowers; and, taking the English and Australian evidence in conjunction, we arrive at the conclusion that many of our best known birds were first named from paintings of a talented convict."

64. Roller (*Coracias pacifica*, Lath.)—Type of *Eurystomus pacificus*: Watling's note :—"Half the size of the bird was taken. It is a rare bird—the third only that we have seen. The colours are much too dull."

65. Piping Roller (Magpie) (*Coracias tibicen*, Lath.)—The type of *Gymnorhina tibicen*. Watling's note :—"Natural size. Native name, 'Iarra-won-nang.' This bird has a soft note not unlike the sound of a well-tuned flute. It is a bird of prey." Sharpe remarks :—"Latham, as usual, has published the original note without acknowledgment, and has twisted it into 'it preys often on small birds,' which is not what Watling wrote."

72. Blue-headed Cuckoo (*Cuculus cyanocephalus*, Lath.)—Sharpe remarks :—"This drawing is the type of the species, and is a very good representation of the Australian Koel."

73. Pheasant-Cuckoo (*Cuculus phasianus*, Lath.)—This drawing is the type of *Centropus* or well-known Coucal. Watling's note :—"One-half the natural size. Native name, 'Tem-minck.' The New South Wales Pheasant. The only one seen as yet."

75. Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cuculus flabelliformis*, Lath.)—Dr. Sharpe states that "Latham's description and figure (Gen. Syn. Suppl., ii., p. 138, pl. cxxvi.) are both taken from Watling's drawings, but his plate represents the bird as of a deeper red colour underneath than Watling's picture, which may have faded a little. The latter writer says the figure was of the 'natural size.' It is the type of the species."

76. Glossy Cuckoo (*Cuculus plagosus*, Lath.), of which Sharpe remarks :—"This is the type of *Chalcococcyx plagosus* of Latham, who says he is indebted to Mr. Lambert for some of the birds described by him; so it may be that Latham, when he had these drawings before him, had received them from Mr. Lambert. It is curious that Watling's name is not mentioned, as many of the drawings bear his signature; nor is that of his employer, Mr. James Lee." Watling's note :—"The natural size. The yellow does not appear so bright as in the bird, and, what is very singular in this bird, it has two claws before and behind the feet."

81. Orange-winged Nuthatch (*Sitta chrysoptera*, Lath.)—This is the type of the familiar Orange-winged Sittella. "Latham's figure seems," Sharpe remarks, "to have been copied from Watling's drawing." Watling wrote :—"Three-fourths of its natural size. Native name, 'Mur-ri-gang.' Very rare."

89 and 90. Golden-winged Bee-eater (*Merops chrysopterus*, Lath.)—These represent the Brush Wattle-Bird. Sharpe says :—"The oldest name for *Anellobia mellivora* appears to be *A. chrysoptera* (Lath.), both being founded on Watling's drawings.* His notes are quoted by Latham as follow :—"One-half the natural size. Called by our English people "Quirrick," from its note. Native name, "Wad-de-ar-gal." 2 2

Under drawing 90 Watling wrote :—"This genus of Flycatcher is very numerous in New South Wales, and seldom seen but near the seashore, especially about the natives' resort. It is a most active, lively bird, constantly in action, either sucking honey, taking flies, or

**A. mellivora* is derived from Mellivorous Creeper (*Certhia mellivora*, Lath.) Watling drawing, 104.

contending with other birds. Two or three of these birds will rout a flock of Blue-bellied Parrots, a genus which they are often engaged with."

92. Black-and-yellow Bee-eater (*Merops phrygius*, Lath.)—This is the type of the beautiful "Mock Regent-Bird" or Warty-faced Honey-eater. Latham states his description is taken from the "drawings of Mr. Lambert." Watling's note under another drawing (No. 93) of the same bird:—"About half the natural size. The light tint round the eye is not plumage, but a kind of fleshy excrescence, resembling in substance the gills of a cock or hen."

102 and 103. Slender-billed Creeper (*Certhia tenuirostris*, Lath.)—The type of the Spinebill. Watling's note:—"Natural size. This bird lives on flies and honey. When flying it makes a singular noise as if the tips of its wings were beat together under the bird's belly. It hovers over flowers, and extracts honey with its brush tongue."

121 and 122. Black-eyed Thrush.—These are the co-types of the beautiful Yellow-tufted Honey-eater, to which Latham has apparently given two names—the first, *Turdus melanops*; the second, *Muscicapa auricomis*.

124. Lunulated Thrush (*Turdus lunulatus*, Lath.)—Sharpe says:—"It is a good figure of an *Oreocichla*, and is the type of *O. lunulata* (Lath.) According to Watling's note, it is of the 'natural size.'"

134. Black-cheeked Warbler (*Sylvia chrysops*, Lath.)—Type of the Yellow-faced Honey-eater (*Philotis chrysops*). Watling's note:—"Half the natural size. It has a brush tongue, and is a lively little bird. It lives a good deal on honey."

140. No. 1, Black-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa pectoralis*, Lath.)

140. No. 2, Guttural Thrush (*Turdus gutturalis*, Lath.)—Watling's note of the latter says:—"Natural size. The yellow is much brighter than the bird supposed to be a female of No. 1." Notwithstanding this *leading* field observation of Watling's, Latham gave the two drawings separate names.

149. Black-browed Thrush (*Turdus melanophrys*, Lath.)—This is the type of the Bell-Miner. Watling's note:—"The tongue is short and very brushy. Native name, 'Dill-ring'—a strange coincidence in name for a Bell-Bird.

152. Sordid Thrush (*Turdus sordidus*, Lath.)—This figure is the type of the Common Wood-Swallow. Watling's note:—"Natural size. Native name, 'Goo-le-bee.'" Here, again, we have a little confusion in names, for Latham called a previous painting (No. 144), representing the young of the Wood-Swallow, *Turdus tenebrosus*.

154. Short-winged Thrush (*Turdus brachypterus*, Lath.)—The type of the Bristle-Bird (*Sphenura*). Watling's note:—"Natural size. This is a ground bird, with very small wings and very short flight."

164. Black-lined Grosbeak (*Loxia bellus*, Lath.)—Type of the Fire-tailed Finch. Watling says:—"Native name, 'Wee-bong.' Natural size. The only one yet seen. May."

166. Temporal Finch (*Fringilla temporalis*, Lath.)—This is the well-known Red-browed Finch. Watling says:—"Native name, 'Goo-lung-ag-ga.' It is a very common bird in New South Wales, easily domesticated, and of a lively disposition even in a cage, and in a day or two it is easily reconciled."

176 and 177. Rufous-fronted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa rufifrons*, Lath.)—These are the types of a familiar Flycatcher (*Rhipidura rufifrons*). Watling remarks:—"This bird is of very short flight, and found among brush, rotten wood, and long grass. Native name, 'Burril.' November."

187. Orange-rumped Flycatcher (*Muscicapa melanocephala*, Lath.)—Type of the brilliant Orange-backed Malurus or Wren-Warbler.

196. Streaked Warbler (*Sylvia sagittata*, Lath.)—The type of the Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola*). Watling's note:—"This bird sings remarkably well."

209. Ciliary Warbler (*Zosterops cærulescens*, Lath.)—The well-known White-eye. Watling's note:—"One-half the natural size. This little bird is the only one of the kind ever seen. The white round the ciliary process of the eye is composed of the most beautiful small white feathers. *The pride and vanity of the draughtsman has (have) induced him to put his name to all the drawings, but should you publish them I think the name may be left out.*"

There are further interesting notes on the Latham-Watling types, namely:—

216 and 217. Two Swifts (*Chætura caudacuta* and *Micropus pacificus*).

220. Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*).

226. Pallid Cuckoo (described as a Pigeon, *Columba pallida*, Lath.)

227. Brown Quail (*Synoicus australis*).

238. Pacific Heron (*Notophoxyx pacifica*).

275 and 277. Two Gulls (*Gabianus pacificus* and *Larus novæ-hollandiæ*), &c., &c.,

besides much fascinating and informative history of many "long-forgotten feathers," the elucidation of which history the world at large, and particularly Australia, are for ever debtor to that painstaking and conscientious scientist and servant of the British Museum—the late R. Bowdler-Sharpe, F.R.S.

THE BIRDS OF THE SWAN RIVER DISTRICT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

BY W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A., R.A.O.U.

I.—INTRODUCTION.

A WRITER in *The Ibis* recently remarked that it would be possible to compile a list of the birds likely to be met with in any locality in the world from existing literature. This is possibly true of other continents, but is certainly far from being true of Australia. An ornithologist who had never resided in Perth would, I suppose, imagine that all the birds generally described in text-books as found throughout Australia would be met with in course of time, together with those recorded as occurring in South-West Australia. A list compiled in this way would contain far more



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