

A Nest of the Pheasant Coucal.—The nest of the Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianinus*) shown in the accompanying photograph was found in a stool of cane at one of the sugar-cane farms in Ayr, North Queensland. The nest was built of cane-trash and lined with gum leaves. One of the four eggs was undersized, as is clearly visible in the photograph.—Rev. C. O. EDWARDS, The Rectory, Ayr, N.Q.

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How to Spell "Emu."—Dr. Alfred Newton, in his "Dictionary of Birds," spells the name "Emeu," which seems to me preferable to the rather abrupt form now in use. The Californian writer Bret Harte used the same orthography as Dr. Newton, in the humorous poem about the Naughty Emeu which plucked and swallowed a diamond scarf-pin from a gentleman's cravat, thereby causing an irremediable breach between two fond lovers. It was, however, Rev. Bobby Knopwood, our first Tasmanian chaplain, who got the utmost out of the name by the insertion of no less than three "e's" in a word of six letters! Mr. Knopwood, with Captain Merthon and several others, boated up the Derwent to about 30 miles above Sullivan's Cove, then walked several miles up the west side of the stream. In his diary, under date of 7th March, 1804, he writes: "We walked on the west side of the river; hills very high. When one side of the river was hilly, the other was a valley, and it continued so for more than 40 miles from the camp" (now Hobart) "where there was an extensive plain of very few trees. We see Kangaroos, *Emewes*, Pigeons, and Parrots." Knopwood's party were the first white men to gaze upon this extensive tract, now well known as the Macquarie Plains.—H. STUART DOVE, W. Devonport, Tasmania.

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White-headed Stilts and Other Water Birds near Melbourne.—Whilst on a ramble near Edithvale on October 4, 1924, I came across a large temporary swamp, left behind by the recent heavy rains, lying across the Dandenong Road for a distance of perhaps three hundred yards, and extending about the same distance on either side. No means of crossing being at hand, and not wishing to make a long trip back, I had no recourse but to remove my footgear and commence to wade through. Just as I entered the water, a bird call unfamiliar to my ears attracted my notice, so my steps were immediately turned to the left side of the road, the direction whence the call originated. Wading a couple of hundred yards from the roadside, the water began to get shallower, and left several small areas of grass-covered mud, drying above the water. Here I flushed two long red-legged, handsome birds, which proved to be White-headed Stilts. They rose into the air uttering a call easily recognised as that of one of the water birds, and were joined by several others. In flight they appeared most remarkable birds, looking

all out of proportion, the long legs trailing out behind, giving one the impression of a very long tail. I walked about the edges of the water for about an hour. At a moderate estimate, I should say there were at least fifty or sixty of these dainty, red-legged visitors, scattered about on my side of the road. There must have been an abundance of food to keep them located here, for another week found them still lingering. Some sportsman (?) had, in the meantime, shot one of the poor creatures into a mass of blood-stained feathers, and left it, wings outstretched, hanging on a nearby fence, a tribute to his wonderful marksmanship! I don't think they were nesting anywhere round, as they would keep flying to a different area if I approached near them. Probably a few more weeks would find them moving to more suitable nesting areas, but it was pleasant to find them so near the city. Another bird in evidence on the swamp, was a small white Tern in small parties, diving, or rather, falling, as it was too shallow to dive, into the water, after dinner no doubt. It was either the Fairy Ternlet or the Whiskered Tern, I think. Passing along, I flushed six Australian Snipe, also several Black-fronted Dotterels, feeding round the edges. On the farther end were a number of White-fronted Herons, also some Cormorants.—C. H. BORCH, R.A.O.U., Newport, Victoria..

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The Arrival of the Mutton-Birds—A Remarkable Sight.

—The return of the Mutton-Birds to Phillip Island, in Westernport Bay, Victoria, an event that happens just about the same time every November, is described in an interesting report in the Melbourne *Argus*.

"Mutton-Bird" is the popular name for the Short-tailed Petrel or Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), which nests on the islands of Bass Strait and on the Victorian coast. The birds come in myriads each year, remain through the summer, and then mysteriously disappear. Describing the latest arrival of these migrants, the *Argus* says: "Far on the eastern horizon a black patch could be discerned. It grew in size, until finally it could be distinguished as a flight of fast-moving birds. Outdistancing the rest, a dozen reached the cliff at exactly 8 o'clock. There—wheeling, swooping, circling, and diving—they uttered strange unmusical cries, as though rejoicing to be home again. The return of the Mutton-Birds had begun. For some time they came in singly—here a bird and there a bird. Gradually their numbers increased until the sky was covered with them. Swiftly they hurtled in from the sea, by tens, by twenties, by hundreds, by thousands; but not to land at once. There seemed a spirit of unrest about the birds, as if, having reached their objective after long wandering, they were too overjoyed to be still, but must be darting and poising, rushing and gliding, wheeling and circling, all the time screaming discordantly till the semi-darkness was filled with



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