

writer. The point is that save for certain introductory notes rendered by the western bird before it leaves its perch for the flight, the mating songs of the two species are almost identical. This is the more interesting since neither the call-notes nor alarm notes of the two species are at all alike. This then seems to me good evidence that before these species became separated, their common ancestor had a mating song, one which may have been derived even more anciently from a common ancestor with the Bobolink. Then geographical conditions separated the birds and the ordinary songs were slowly evolved, the eastern birds producing a high piercing whistle, while the western ones evolved a rich, loud thrush-like warble and this leads me to believe that the first songs of birds were mating songs, evolved by sexual selection and limited to the period of courtship only.

ARETAS A. SAUNDERS.

Norwalk, Conn., Nov. 26, 1918.

#### **Australia's Effort to Save her Bird Fauna.**

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In my last October Australian mail I received a most interesting letter from my friend Captain S. A. White, of Fulham, South Australia, where he holds the Local State Secretaryship for the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Captain White is one of Australia's best known ornithologists and general naturalists. He has conducted upwards of a dozen scientific expeditions into the unexplored wilds of Southern Australia, where he has discovered unknown races of natives, collected many new forms of birds, plants, and other specimens — and, finally, published some six or eight booklets, illustrated by fine halftones, treating of these several expeditions.

Among his other experiences Captain White has come to realize the fact that many species of Australian birds are on the very verge of extermination; some have already gone forever, while a whole host more are becoming scarce. This pitiable state of affairs applies also to the flora over similar areas.

Now Captain White has recently taken hold of this matter with great force and in 'The Register' of Adelaide invited the attention of the Commonwealth to this serious state of things, especially to the rapid disappearance of many of Australia's most beautiful and interesting species of birds — and we all know what a magnificent avifauna she has.

It would appear that the Government has repeatedly broken its promises to set aside "Flinders Chase" on Kangaroo Island for this purpose, which Captain White points out is an ideal place for the purpose. In the course of his remarks in 'The Register' for October 9, 1918, he says "News came to hand by the last American mail that another 12,000 acres of woodland, prairie and watercourse has been added to the great forest reserves in the

county of Illinois, and more than 30 miles of shore line of Lake Michigan has been set aside as a sanctuary for wild animals and birds. This news comes when we here in South Australia are fighting hard to show the 'powers that be' the necessity of setting aside an area of poor country on Kangaroo Island for the same purpose, and shame be it to South Australia that there are no such parks or reserves in this State as there are in America and even approaching those now existing in other States of the Commonwealth."

Few countries in the world possess the bird fauna that Southern Australia has, as any complete ornithological work with colored plates of all the species will demonstrate. Even such an admirable little work as 'An Australian Bird Book' by Dr. J. A. Leach, with its plain and colored figures, gives a fine realization of the extraordinary avifauna of that great island continent. We find no Humming Birds, Vultures or Woodpeckers, to be sure, but an enormous array of nearly 400 species of everything else known to the Class Aves, including such archaic types as the Emu, Lyrebird, Moundbuilders, and so on. A very large percentage of the forms are of wonderfully varied and brilliant plumage, especially among the Kingfishers, Rollers, Cockatoos, Parrots, Chats, Regents, Honey-eaters, Diamond Birds, and many others.

It is greatly to be hoped that the government will give heed to such earnest appeals to it as have been made by such distinguished and far-seeing ornithologists as Captain White, Dr. Leach and not a few others among Australian scientists and sincere lovers of all that nature offers in that grand old sunny continent of the Southern Hemisphere.

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Washington, D. C., 28th November, 1918.

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

In a discussion of nomenclature in 'The Auk' for October, 1918, p. 508, the writer referred to a "list of *proposed* changes and additions to the 'Check List' compiled by Dr. H. C. Oberholser and embodying the compiler's opinions upon certain of the cases."

This sentence seems to have been interpreted by some readers as a reflection upon Dr. Oberholser by charging him with inserting in a list of "proposed changes" a personal opinion as to the advisability of the changes. No such criticism was intended and while the writer sees no reason why Dr. Oberholser should not have added such opinion, nevertheless, he did not do so, and the writer was misled by certain opinions already published elsewhere and quoted in these lists.