

The Emu. Journal of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Supplement to Vol. 73 (Pp. 203-255). "Invited Papers on Ornithology in Australasia: Practice, Prospects and Progress." November 1973. A\$3.25.

New Zealand membership of the RAOU is minimal, standing at less than a dozen. And this is to be regretted if only because more New Zealand ornithologists are not able to avail themselves of the opportunity of reading and enjoying such general reviews of their subject as is presented, for instance, within this special supplement to *The Emu*. It is true, I know, that *The Emu* is received by 8 libraries throughout New Zealand (Auckland, 2; Wellington, 4; Christchurch, 1; Dunedin, 1) but those who want to read it casually must make an effort to do so. I am told that the lack of New Zealand interest in the RAOU is a reflection of what prospective members would get for their money — essentially four issues of *The Emu* (and a *Newsletter*) at A\$10.00 per year and of which the New Zealand content may be quite slight. Perhaps the sole incentive for joining the RAOU is to get *The Emu* but a consumer analysis would not rate it as a "best buy" for a New Zealander. The 1973 quarterly issues contained 40 papers and shorter notes but only one of these is directly concerned with New Zealand birds and perhaps only half a dozen others are of interest to New Zealand readers. The content and scope of *The Emu*, a journal of "Australasian" ornithology is in itself a topic for consideration and examination by two of the authors of papers in this Supplement, of whom more anon. Indeed, the New Zealand percentage of these "Invited Papers" on ornithology in "Australasia" illustrates this common feature although it does not make the subject matter any the less interesting or important. The overall impression left after reading this Supplement is, at least to this reviewer on the east side of the Tasman, of a satisfaction, albeit smugness, which we might have about New Zealand achievements so modestly listed by C. A. Fleming in his short review of New Zealand ornithological organization and administration. We (in the form of the Ornithological Society of N.Z.) seem to have led "Australasia," if not the world, in so many aspects of organization of co-operative schemes and recording methods in addition to providing and maintaining a relatively cheap, well illustrated and generally readable journal including the novel feature of "Classified Summarised Notes." It is, nonetheless, regrettable that New Zealand examples and references could not have been used even by way of comparison in the strictly Australian articles.

The President of the RAOU, Mrs Pauline Reilly, introduces this appraisal, initiated by the Editor and endorsed by Council, of the present state of "Australasian ornithology [which] is in a period of change." It is said that it "indicates our awareness for a broader outlook." How broad it may be is best shown by some controversial suggestions put forward in Allan McEvey's article concerning the potential of *The Emu* as a widely-based journal of ornithology in greatest possible coverage of the term (which might even allow one to mention spiders or animals other than birds!). Mrs Reilly's three page introduction tells us in summary the notable points made by each contributor, at least as she sees them, and interposes her own beliefs here and there. She concludes with an invitation that might well be taken up by New Zealand readers concerned not only with

the development of ornithology in "Australasia" but more specifically with the newly proposed role of the RAOU, and of its journal, as seen by its Council: "We hope that after reading the papers and meditating on the implications, people will be prepared to comment constructively. . . . Hopefully, we shall be able to publish both comment and further papers in occasional supplements, but this of course will depend on the response we receive. We trust that this present attempt will be of value to ornithology, perhaps even beyond Australasia. We have aimed to show that we are concerned to see a happy union of professional and amateur talent and to co-operate, not compete, with other bird societies."

Certainly "this present attempt" is of value and readers will have to meditate on the implications as Mrs Reilly suggests. There is much to inform, to stimulate, to provoke and to be grateful for, even if one constantly regrets that "Australasia" is too often synonymous with Australia not only in the RAOU's composition but throughout the pages of most of the contributions.

The Supplement is made up as follows: D. L. Serventy — "Organization and administration of ornithology (4 pp.); C. A. Fleming — "Organization and administration of ornithology in New Zealand" (2½ pp.); M. G. Ridpath — "Co-ordinated research overseas" (3½ pp.); S. J. J. F. Davies — "Application of co-ordinated research on birds to Australian conditions" (5 pp.); R. M. Lockley — "Bird observatories and field study centres" (8 pp.); D. Purchase — "The significance and limitations of field notes" (4½ pp.); D. D. Dow — "Publication and ornithology" (7 pp.); J. A. Keast — "The role of the museum in ornithology" (6 pp.); A. R. McEvey — "The metaphysic of ornithology" (8 pp.).

D. L. Serventy traces the evolution and particular development of scientific societies and makes an illuminating comparison of ornithological societies in the United Kingdom and Australia. He looks to future needs in Australian ornithology in proposing an organization corresponding to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Trust for Ornithology and he predicts the growth and fulfilment of the RAOU itself, especially related to the developing of an Australian Institute of Field Ornithology. Finance, as always, would seem to be a major obstacle but the right man in the job is stressed by Serventy as fundamental. C. A. Fleming outlines, in a similar way, the growth of New Zealand societies involved with ornithology including the transferring of ornithology from the pioneer New Zealand Institute, later the Royal Society of N.Z., to those concerned with protection and conservation of birds and their haunts and to Government Departments, Museums, and University departments. Local groups of ornithologists which led to the formation of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand are discussed but the achievements of the OSNZ itself are baldly stated in 8 lines of text! How much we can bask in the glory of those pioneers who founded the OSNZ as well as adulate the many members who have worked in so many ways to allow the author to say — "The Society has thrived, unchallenged as the leading New Zealand body in its field [stated by Fleming, echoing the original Marples-era constitution, to be "to encourage, organize and carry out studies by field work on living birds in their natural state on a national scale"], supported by members from all other organizations — societies, government agencies, museums."

M. G. Ridpath discusses co-ordinated enquiry in ornithology, i.e. the voluntary gathering of information by many observers scattered over a wide area. He gives a good account of such activities run by the British Trust for Ornithology and in the United States and leaves it "to the reader himself to judge the relevance of their experience to Australian ornithology in 1973." He makes two important points, amongst others: "Co-ordinated investigations depend entirely upon the ornithologists who gather the data. The project stands or falls on their interest and enthusiasm, both of which depend largely on the feed-back they get from the organizer." It pleases us to read — "A good example of feed-back is provided by Bull's (1971) report on progress of the New Zealand mapping scheme . . ." He concludes with a theme found in several other articles in this Supplement: "Finally, and most important of all, the results must in due course be published. Organizers have varied considerably in the speed with which they have published their final reports. The sooner people read what their efforts have shown the more likely they are to help future enquiries."

Stephen Davies follows by describing how such enquiries have been used in Australia and discusses their future. He writes of the importance of good leaders for such projects and makes the point, stressed by other contributors, that a "project is only 'successful' if it leads to one or more significant published papers that answer the question posed at the outset." He notes also: "One factor in making co-ordinated birdwatching projects successful is that many people enjoy helping each other." He argues "that the Field Investigation Committee [of the RAOU] should spend more time looking for good leaders and helping them to develop co-ordinated projects suitable to their field of study than in looking for suitable co-ordinated projects as such." Once again, we in New Zealand can show a certain satisfaction that we have found both suitable projects and good leaders with a minimum of effort or organization. Perhaps like Mrs Beecher Stowe's Topsy, they just "grow'd" as the need came. Davies goes on to discuss the sorts of co-ordinated projects — short-term, long-term, and perpetual — and gives Australian examples of each. Once again the importance of publication is stressed in his concluding paragraph: "Rapid publication of results is a tremendous stimulation to collaborators."

R. M. Lockley writes on bird observatories and field study centres. From time to time the idea of the establishment of a national bird observatory or of regional study centres has been put forward in New Zealand. Lockley's account of the history, scope, organization and problems of observatories and study centres in Britain, based on his own pioneer work and wide experience, will be of considerable interest particularly when related to the idea that even where there are many less migrant species there can still be much study of residents and of the plants and animals occurring in the vicinity of such stations.

D. Purchase's contribution on field notes might well be essential reading for all of us. This is something we need not feel smug or satisfied about. Even Homer nods. The basic quality, expressed by David Lack in his "Hints on research for bird watchers" (*Bird Study* 7: 9-20, 1960) and emphasized by Purchase, which is needed in our recording is *integrity*. A multitude of sins of both commission and omission may be made by the recorder of field notes, as Purchase demonstrates, and it is good to remind ourselves that honesty is not

a matter of degree. Purchase stresses particular points in both *inaccurate* and *inadequate* recording of data, but, more importantly perhaps, he asks us "to remember that no matter how accurate and plentiful are the data that have been collected they are of little use to Australian ornithology unless they are eventually published." He concludes — "It makes no difference whether the data are collected and published as part of a co-operative research project; the main thing is ensure that they are published so that the time and effort put into their collection are not wasted."

Pleas for the establishment of a Rarities Committee and the need for urgency and high endeavour in producing a Checklist will further convince New Zealand readers that our Australian friends may well look to our example.

Douglas Dow continues the theme of the necessity of publication with his "Publication and ornithology." He gives a valuable discussion of the kinds of ornithological publications dealing especially with the notions of "scientific" and "popular" writing, the problems of editors and referees, style and language, illustrations and the mechanics of publishing, and he concludes with an interesting personal assessment of the Australian publications in the field of ornithology. He analyzes the need in Australia for national and regional journals and especially for "a journal of high quality specializing in field identification and distribution." "Likewise," he says, "we have no journal to turn to for systematic and detailed summaries of the distribution of species." He would also like to see — "An important contribution that could be made by some regional journals might be a critically edited annotated annual list of species." It is a pity that Dr Dow's examination was limited to Australian matters. We would have been interested to see where *Notornis* fitted into his scheme of evaluation but to this reviewer at least, who might well be biased, it seems that the New Zealand journal combines useful features of a national and a regional, a scientific and a popular journal, an organ both of an ornithological society and of ornithology itself, and our "Classified Summarised Notes" provide a fine example of the annual list desired for the Australian scene by Dr Dow.

Allen Keast gives a timely and valuable analysis of the role of the museum in ornithology derived from his own wide experience in this topic. Traditionally in New Zealand, as in many other countries, ornithology, both professional and amateur, has been based on the museum, largely because museums are not only repositories of collections and the public displays arising from them but also that in New Zealand the four metropolitan museums have boasted professional ornithologists on their staffs who have guided local groups and individuals with their personal expertise and field experience. The research role of museums is now more complicated and much more work is now being done in universities and government departments in New Zealand and in Australia also according to Keast. Rather than have competition, it is time for museums in New Zealand (as in Australia) to examine their traditional role, especially their major responsibility of acquiring and curating collections. Keast gives some pertinent views on the morality of collecting which will bear consideration by those involved both in collecting itself and in regulating and policing such collecting.

Much of Keast's commentary is directly relevant to the New Zealand scene where collecting, often in quantity, may be just as necessary as in Australia and for the same reasons which he details. The role of the contemporary museum in public education (the major role in this reviewer's opinion) is stressed. Keast feels that "today's Australian museum ornithologist should concentrate, more than anything, on field-based, functionally orientated approaches, using statistical tools, voice and other analyses, as well as studies of skins and skeletons, in his taxonomic work." This, of course, suggests that museum ornithologists must be highly academically qualified, which has not always been the tradition of the good field naturalist and museum man. Ornithology will have to become much more of a Science if the criterion is sought in terms of expenditure, if Keast's wish comes true. There is a view, however, that research in natural history in museums in financially-limited countries such as New Zealand might well be less ambitious and that more concentration might be put on displaying what professional scientists employed by other institutions are doing. The museum ornithologist might become, then, a populariser, organiser, display director and translator of research. Does one judge the "success" of a museum by its public galleries and popular handbooks or by the output of scientific papers by its "curators"? With the limited number of openings in New Zealand for museum ornithologists (or for professional ornithologists at all), Keast's suggestion for the Australian future is applicable here also: "... so much work needs to be done on the taxonomy and evolution of Australian birds that every effort should be made to persuade ornithologists at overseas museums and universities to carry out research in Australia." I have long been an advocate of Research Associates attached to New Zealand museums and I would have been glad if Keast had talked of their feasibility and obligations in the Australian scene at least.

Professor Keast's contribution to the Supplement will be read with great interest by all concerned with where museums find their place in ornithology.

Perhaps the most fascinating (and certainly the most provocative) of all the contributions is Allan McEvey's scholarly but controversial treatment of ornithology as a branch of zoology fostering a basic "spirituality," as he calls it, a contribution which will appeal to those of us who see more in a bird than a warm-blooded vertebrate with an external covering of feathers. Mr McEvey, noted museum worker and bibliographer, one-time President of the RAOU and still deeply concerned about its role, will probably have few followers for his radical propositions which deserve a long review themselves so much are they worth "meditating on." For those readers who might be frightened away after the first half page, I say read on. There are important issues considered here and a quiet tolerance will show that Mr McEvey's thoughts are worth setting against the New Zealand and our traditional, "suburban" attitudes to our chosen interest of ornithology.

The Supplement is a milestone in the history of the RAOU and even if we, as kindred souls across the Tasman, are disappointed in the lack of New Zealand mention or of examples of what we may feel proud to have achieved or even a view of how we appear to

those across the sea, we must congratulate those responsible in the RAOU and regard this as a valuable document on which to develop the future of ornithology in the *Australasian* Region. It is, indeed, an important assessment.

E. W. D.



AUCKLAND REGIONAL AUTHORITY REPORTS

The report referred to in the review of "The Coastal Ecology of a Recreation Resource Area Kawakawa Bay to Miranda" (*Notornis* 20 (3): 287, line 1, Sept. 1973) is entitled: "A Recreation Resource Area Kawakawa Bay to Miranda" 95 pp., 24 figs, 13 pls, June 1972, prepared by Michael B. Elliot, Michael R. Simister, and Marjorie R. Bacon, Planning Division, Auckland Regional Authority. It gives a detailed analysis of physical factors, ecology (including marine and bird life), cultural factors and the demand for and present activities in recreation. The section "Ecology" (pp. 29-51), consisting of "Marine Life" (pp. 31-39) and "Bird Life" (pp. 43-51) is "an abstract from a detailed report which will be published separately." This is the report reviewed in *Notornis*. Those who want more details of the non-biological aspects of this study are advised to obtain the earlier report which is also available from the ARA, Private Bag, Auckland.



Have you seen "Sea and Ice: a naturalist in Antarctica" by L. J. Halle, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1973? The ecology of Campbell Island and the Royal Albatrosses of Taiaroa Head are discussed amongst other illustrations of the natural history of the Antarctic and Subantarctic including further observations of Leopard Seal predation on Adelie Penguins at Cape Crozier (cf. article in this issue of *Notornis*, pp. 36-69).



Two of our members, Mr H. F. Heinekamp and Dr G. W. Ramsay, have prepared a comprehensive report on the treatment of oiled sea birds — "Interim report on oiled sea-birds, presented to the Nelson Section, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, November 1973," 8 pp. A copy of this most useful and important report is in the library of the OSNZ and we hope that it will become widely known about since rescue of oiled sea birds could well become a real problem in New Zealand waters.