

able country in search of new territory, and they may have come from the Murray River, 25 miles to the east, or from the Light River, about the same distance to the west.

However, at the time the far north interior of the State and Central Australia was suffering from the effects of severe drought. As birds such as the Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*), Fantail-Warbler (*Cisticola exilis*), and Grass-bird would be driven out of their haunts there by the unfavourable ecological factors which would have developed, it is reasonable to suppose that they would migrate towards some point on, or near, the coastline of the continent. Consequently, there is at least a remote possibility at such a time that the birds noted by me in strange surroundings had come some hundreds of miles on a southward migration.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 1/6/53.

Obituaries

ALEXANDER J. GRAY

Alexander Gray, who died on April 20, 1953, after a long illness, was born in Dunkenny, Stirlingshire, Scotland, on June 30, 1888. In 1912 he came to Australia, where he followed his profession of engineer, but a few years later he enlisted in the A.I.F. and served overseas in the First World War. He became interested in the Sherbrooke Forest and its Lyrebirds during the 'thirties, and for a number of years took a very active interest in the welfare of the forest. It was only when he became stricken with a long fatal illness that he ceased to visit there. His interest in birds was almost entirely confined to Lyrebirds, and in conjunction with Mr. A. G. Campbell he published an article on these birds in *The Emu*, vol. 42. Two short articles on the same subject appeared later.—D.J.D.

F. LAWSON WHITLOCK

Frederick Lawson Whitlock, an honorary member of the Union, died in Bunbury, W.A., on June 15, 1953, aged 93 years. His wife pre-deceased him in December, 1952. For some years he had been living in retirement at Bunbury with his daughter. He was active to the end, despite the handicap of deafness. In latter years he became very interested in entomology, his ornithological activities being almost confined to patrolling the beaches in winter for storm-drifted sea-birds. His last published article, which appeared in *Gould League Notes*, 1952, dealt with that subject.

Journal Emu 1953 Vol 53:



The late Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock (left),
with Dr. D. L. Serventy.

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In *The Emu*, vol. 39, p. 279, Major H. M. Whittell published an interesting account of Mr. Whitlock and his ornithological excursions, to which members are referred. Working largely for H. L. White, he made trips to a number of out-of-the-way areas chiefly in Western Australia, but including the journey to the James Ranges in Central Australia in search of the Night-Parrot.—C.E.B.

TOM GIVENS

Thomas Victor Givens, the author, with Mr. W. B. Hitchcock, of the article on *Cisticola juncidis* in this part, died on April 26, 1953. He contributed three papers to *The Emu*, the first, vol. 26, p. 56, also dealing with *Cisticola*—field notes on days with the 'Corn-birds' along the Bulleen flats.

Mr. Givens saw service in New Guinea and Bougainville during the recent war. After discharge from the Army he rejoined and served in New South Wales and in Darwin until January, 1953. At Darwin he carried out observations on the local avifauna and also collected birds and other animals for various sanctuaries and other faunal institutions.—C.E.B.

Reviews

Western Australian Ornithology.—The May issue of *The Western Australian Naturalist* (vol. 3, no. 8) is devoted largely to ornithological papers. Chief of these is D. L. Serventy's account of 'The Southern Invasion of Northern Birds during 1952'. Fifteen species are discussed, their distribution during this irruption being compared with that of their normal range and former irruptions (if any). Most interesting is the case of the Letter-winged Kite, which was recorded from several localities over a large portion of the State: previously there was only one reliable record for Western Australia. These birds must have come from the east, whereas the more usual movement was from the Kimberleys for varying distances southwards. Examples of the latter were afforded by the Brolga (as far south as Beacon in the wheat belt—an extension of 650 miles), Straw-necked Ibis, White Ibis (first extra-tropical records—as far south as Busselton), White-necked Heron, Pied Goose (the first south-western records since 1905), and the Fork-tailed Kite (first recorded irruption into extra-tropical Western Australia, with map).

As Brian Glover has already described the irruption in South Australia (*South Australian Ornithologist*, vol. 20, pt. 7), it remains for eastern ornithologists to do likewise. Such papers are not only interesting in themselves, but also supply definite data on the wanderings of certain species, and will doubtless be valuable to future speculations on the 'wherefores' of bird-distribution.

The remaining contributions are short. D. N. Calderwood describes a nest of a Senegal Dove made partly of wire. E. H. Sedgwick reports a probable breeding record of the Red-capped Robin at Woorooloo, within the normal breeding range of the Scarlet Robin. At Bow River, J. W. Baggs observed three Ground Parrots, the first seen in Western Australia since 1913, when F. L. Whitlock saw them at Denmark, 25 miles farther east. C. M. STONE

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Frederick Lawson Whitlock

By MAJOR H. M. WHITTELL, O.B.E., Bridgetown, W.A.

In June next Mr. Lawson Whitlock not only reaches the advanced age of 80 years, but also completes thirty-nine years of research in the bird-life of Australia. As a memento of his birthday, and in appreciation of the work he has done in Australian ornithology, it was decided to submit a portrait, accompanied by an account of his travels after birds, for publication in this present issue of *The Emu*. The writer is pleased at having been given the opportunity of writing this account of the activities of a valued personal friend of over eleven years' standing.

A detailed list of the many new forms of birds collected, or of the numerous occasions on which Mr. Whitlock was the first to find the then-unknown eggs of many species, would prove too great a task to come within the scope of this short biography. Not only were Mr. Whitlock's discoveries very numerous, but he has the gift of being able so to describe his field-work that the many records he has left in the pages of *The Emu* are not only literary efforts of a high standard, but are also word-pictures of the habits of the species with which he has come into contact. Gilbert, Carter, Rogers, Milligan, and Whitlock are all noteworthy figures in Western Australian ornithology, but none of the first four travelled so widely within the State as has Mr. Whitlock, and none has left for posterity such complete accounts of the habits of the birds they encountered.

Frederick Lawson Whitlock was born at Nottingham, England, on June 3, 1860, being the second son of Thomas Oliver Whitlock, of Loughborough, Leicestershire. After two years at a preparatory school, he entered Loughborough Grammar School and remained there for eight years, for a time being a contemporary at school of the late Richard Bowdler Sharpe, of the British Museum (Natural History Department).

Mr. Whitlock very early developed a taste for natural history and made a small collection of Leicestershire butterflies and moths under the guidance of a skilled entomological neighbour. He also developed a strong interest in birds, with a special interest in their migrations, and visited many parts of the north of England to observe their nesting habits, and also the coasts of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, to learn facts about migration. A small collection of eggs and skins was formed during the course of observational work in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Warwickshire.

After leaving school Mr. Whitlock entered the office of the Registrar of the Leicestershire County Court as an accountant, and later, after following for many years a

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business combined with insurance, was compelled for reasons of health, to seek a more equable climate. Accompanied by his wife and an only daughter, he arrived in Western Australia in April, 1901. His only son remained in England, but has now for many years resided in Buenos Aires.

Mr. Whitlock, although twelve years the elder, had been at school with Mr. L. F. von Wiedt, who now resides near Brisbane, and together the two left Kalgoorlie about August, 1901, on a prospecting trip to the Blackhills, about fifteen miles south of Bulong. They were there about three weeks and then travelled to Boorara (Golden Ridge, twelve miles south-east of Kalgoorlie), and were there certainly at Christmas, 1901, as Mr. Whitlock remembers their having had their Christmas dinner together. Shortly afterwards Mr. von Wiedt left for Perth where he obtained an appointment at the Museum, of which the Director was then the late Bernard H. Woodward. The appointment is here mentioned as it was the means of Mr. Whitlock's getting into correspondence with the late A. W. Milligan, who was then honorary ornithologist to the Museum. Later, when in September, 1902, Mr. Whitlock moved up to Lake Austin on the Murchison Goldfield, Milligan persuaded the Museum Committee to make a grant to be devoted to ornithological collections to be made by Mr. Whitlock. Thus began, over thirty-seven years ago, that splendid work in Western Australian ornithology which was to have such wonderful results, and which—all Australian ornithologists will be glad to appreciate—still continues.

Early in August, 1903, Mr. Whitlock left Day Dawn for Wurarga, on the Yalgoo Goldfield, which is some 114 miles east of Geraldton, and remained there for two months, collecting on behalf of the Museum. It was then arranged that he should join Messrs. Milligan and Price Conigrave who intended to investigate the bird-life of the Wongan Hills, and he accordingly travelled, in October, to Mogumber, on the Moore River, and investigated the bird-life of that locality until the other two members of the party arrived. The party made direct to its destination beyond New Norcia and then returned slowly to Mogumber, collecting en route.

Mr. Whitlock remained at Mogumber for a period after the other two ornithologists had returned to Perth, and investigated the bird-life of the Moore River to a distance of twenty miles westward. He then paid a short visit to Rottnest Island and collected for the Museum.

In April, 1904, Mr. Whitlock went to Norseman and remained there till November, 1905. During that period he had considerable field experience with Mr. W. D. Campbell, of the Geological Survey, but did not have much spare time for ornithology. Some collecting was, however,

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done and notes made. Thirty-two years later Mr. Whitlock wrote an account of the bird-life he had noted in the district. On return from Norseman a health-trip resulted in the family's settling near Wilson's Inlet, the house being within half-a-mile of the eastern end of the inlet, and within ten miles of the coast. Mr. Whitlock was at home there until July, 1907, when he was again engaged as field assistant to Mr. W. D. Campbell, the work starting at Arrino, two hundred miles north of Perth, and continuing to Clackline, *via* Lockyer and the Irwin Valley, and ending in March, 1908. Again there was little opportunity for collecting, but notes were kept and Mr. Whitlock added considerably to his field knowledge.

The late H. L. White being desirous of obtaining the services of a collector in Western Australia, Mr. Whitlock was recommended to him by the Museum authorities, and it was arranged that he should collect eggs for Mr. White, and skins for Gregory M. Mathews. It being his intention to join an old friend at Marble Bar and together undertake prospecting work, Mr. Whitlock landed at Port Hedland on May 5, 1908, and travelled to Marble Bar by camel train *via* Poondina, Strelly River, Depot Creek, Shaw River, Gorge Creek, Coongan Crossing, and Doolina Gorge.

Most of the collecting was done during August, September, and October. On September 25, Mr. Whitlock left Marble Bar for the de Grey River, putting in a few days near the mouth of the Talga River. The Talga flows into the Coongan River, and the spot where Mr. Whitlock camped is known as Equibah Pool. Mulyie Station, on the de Grey, was reached on October 4, where camp was pitched till October 10, when Mr. Whitlock travelled to Nannyp Claypan, on the road to Condon, where he remained till October 22. Condon was reached on October 24, and the mangroves were investigated until November 2. On the return journey to Fremantle Mr. Whitlock managed to put in nearly a week in the Rat Island Group of Houtman's Abrolhos.

Then commenced perhaps the most fruitful, in eggs and skins, of all the collecting trips undertaken by the subject of this biography—the visit to the Lake Way district on the Murchison River, during which 360 skins were collected, many of them being given sub-specific rank by Mathews. The trip was made on behalf of Mr. H. L. White, into whose collection all eggs and skins passed.

Mr. Whitlock left Wilson's Inlet on June 18, 1909, and arrived at Nannine by train five days later. Leaving Nannine by express wagon, he reached Wiluna in another week. Lake Way is, in reality, two shallow depressions, separated from one another by a tract of low-lying ground, six or seven miles in breadth. The northern portion is named Lake Violet on the Government maps. Most of the

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work was done near Lake Violet, which contained a large volume of water. This locality was worked until July 29, when operations were transferred to the neighbourhood of Bore Well, about thirty miles west of Wiluna and contiguous to Spinifex Plain. After a fortnight's work there Mr. Whitlock returned on August 15, to work again at Lake Violet. On September 17 he set out for Milly Pool, a sheet of water twenty miles north-west of Wiluna, on the stock route from Peak Hill. There timber was large—york gums, flooded gums, and black-hearts, some of considerable dimensions. Mr. Whitlock remained there for six weeks seeking eggs and skins of the western form of the Spotted Bower-bird, and it was only the setting in of intense heat that eventually caused him to cease working and return to Wiluna on November 6.

In January, 1910, Mr. Whitlock paid a visit to Melbourne, travelling by sea from Albany to Adelaide, thence by train, and returning by the same route. While in Melbourne he took the opportunity of attending a meeting of the Bird Observers Club held on January 27.

Next came two trips to the Stirling Range. There had been exceptionally heavy rains and Mr. Whitlock left home on August 22, 1910, driving to the foot of Donnelly Peak, which was reached on August 31. Unfortunately en route he met with an accident and injuries to his legs made it difficult for him to move easily over rough ground. He was driving two horses in a cart in tandem and was walking alongside the leader, a young horse, which knocked him over and a wheel of the cart went over his legs. Much of the country on the north side of the Stirling Range had just previously been burnt over and Mr. Whitlock believes that he was aided in his field-work by the enforced concentration of the more robust species in the tracts of scrub which had escaped the fires. Lake Balicup, Solomon's Well, Yettermirrup, and Lake Matilda, a sheet of water near Tenterden, where he encountered a fall of five inches of rain in forty-eight hours, were all camping spots. It had been intended to explore, on the way home, the various pools and swamps between Mount Barker and the coast, but a storm on the last day made exploration too difficult, and that area still remains ornithologically unknown.

The following winter was a very mild one, with a rainfall considerably below the average, and so the results of the second visit to the Stirling Range, made in August, 1911, were not as fruitful as would have been the case had the birds been encouraged to breed more freely.

The ensuing three years were spent at home at Wilson's Inlet, of which district Mr. Whitlock obtained a thorough knowledge, and many specimens collected by him passed into the "H. L. White" and "Mathews" collections. No

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general account of his researches in that interesting district has been published, but papers have appeared in the pages of *The Emu* dealing with individual birds such as the Spotless Crane, Ground Parrot, Emu Wren and Bristle-bird. Sydney William Jackson, who has collected so many interesting birds on the opposite side of the continent, visited the Bon and Frankland Rivers and the Nornalup Inlet from August, 1912 to January, 1913, in an abortive search for the Noisy Scrub-bird, on behalf of Mr. H. L. White, and so an extremely interesting meeting between the two famous collectors occurred when Mr. Jackson and Mr. Whitlock met at the latter's home.

In 1914 Mr. Whitlock went to the Nullagine River on behalf of Mr. White, in an unsuccessful search for the nest—then unknown—of the Spinifex-bird (*Eremiornis carteri*), but drought conditions had made bird-life scarce. There is no printed record of the trip, nor is there any account extant of a further unsuccessful search for eggs of the Spinifex-bird on the Coongan River, near Marble Bar, in September, 1917. This latter search was, however, more successful than the previous one, as two nests of the Spinifex-bird were found, and specimens of both sexes of the bird were collected.

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We have, however, an account of a fortnight's visit to Barrow Island, made from Cossack, in the following month, the main object of which was the collecting of skins and eggs of the Black-and-white Wren (*Malurus leucopterus*). Mr. Whitlock was, however, too late for eggs of both the Wren and the Spinifex-bird, which he found to be fairly common on the island. The skins collected on the above trips were reviewed by A. J. Campbell.

In July, 1918, Mr. Whitlock undertook a further trip to Barrow Island and Dirk Hartog Island, and this time was successful in obtaining eggs of both species of birds. He has himself given us an account of the visit to Barrow Island and the skins collected on the trip were again reported on by the late A. J. Campbell. A second visit to Dirk Hartog Island, and the neighbouring Peron Peninsula, was made in June, 1920, and Mr. Whitlock wrote an account of the trip for *The Emu*, whilst Mr. H. L. White described the eggs collected. Mr. Whitlock reached Perth just in time to attend the 1920 R.A.O.U. Congress, held in that city, and during the proceedings gave members an account of his visit to Dirk Hartog Island.

Now came the trip to the Nullarbor Plain on behalf of Mr. H. L. White. Mr. Whitlock arrived at Zanthus, 130 miles east of Kalgoorlie, in July, and, on August 1, 1921, he met Mr. White for half an hour. Mr. White was on his way by transcontinental train to meet a ship at Fremantle, and, after discussion of a species of Blue-bonnet Parrot

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(*Psephotus*) which Mr. Whitlock had seen in a cage at Zanthus, and which had been taken from a nest at Naretha, 205 miles east of Kalgoorlie, it was decided that a search should be made there. When Mr. White passed through Naretha on his way back to "Belltrees," a week later, Mr. Whitlock was able to hand him three specimens of the Parrot. Mr. White showed the skins in Adelaide to Mr. S. A. White, and to Mr. A. J. Campbell in Melbourne, and it was decided to describe the bird as a new species—*Psephotus narethæ*.

After collecting at Naretha Mr. Whitlock moved 75 miles farther east, to Haig, and from there paid a visit to Loongana, which is about 116 miles west of the South Australian and Western Australian border. Perth was reached, on the conclusion of the trip, on November 4, after a very successful collecting expedition. Rains had been good and birds were found to be breeding freely. The trip was further noteworthy in that Mr. Whitlock obtained in the course of it the type female of the Nullarbor Quail-Thrush (*Cin-closoma alisteri*).

While at home resting after his Nullarbor trip Mr. Whitlock suffered another accident, a really serious one this time. Taking a two-wheeled cart to a nearby timber mill, he loaded up with sawn timber with which to build an out-house. Returning home by a bush track one wheel fell into an unseen hole, the cart turned over, Mr. Whitlock was pitched out and was hit on the back of the head by the falling timber. It was several hours before he was found lying unconscious, and it was many days before he was fit and well again.

Mr. Whitlock recovered sufficiently quickly, however, to enable him to leave Fremantle on July 16, 1922, for Point Samson, whence he proceeded by train to Roeburne. On July 25 he left by motor for Mill Stream Station, 85 miles away, on the Fortescue River. The season, however, was one in which the birds did not breed freely and so the results were not particularly noteworthy. One interesting result of the trip was, however, the establishment of the fact that a form of the Fantail Warbler (*Cisticola exilis*) occurs in Western Australia as far south as the Fortescue River. Collecting was also done at Tambery Station, 40 miles east of Mill Stream Station. On November 14 Mr. Whitlock started on his homeward journey.

Early in February, 1923, Mr. White asked him to go to Central Australia in a search for the Night Parrot. Leaving home on March 6, Mr. Whitlock reached Oodnadatta ten days later and left for the north on March 19—a journey of 300 miles by camel to Henbury Station on the Finke River. From Henbury Station the journey was continued to the Hermannsburg Mission Station, north of the James Range, some 65 miles up the Finke. Collecting was delayed

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for some days owing to his being incapacitated by an attack of dysentery, but as soon as he had recovered sufficiently Mr. Whitlock left for Palm Valley, some ten miles south of the mission homestead, where he collected for some months. Returning to the homestead he used that centre as a base and made expeditions to all points of the compass. While at the mission Mr. Whitlock had the pleasure of meeting Sir Baldwin Spencer, who passed through the district in May. Mr. Whitlock reached home on November 24, after a most strenuous trip, which, although a skin of a Night Parrot was not obtained, produced material of a very valuable nature, and has added much to our knowledge of the bird forms of Central Australia.

Next followed the visit to the Fitzroy River in the Kimberleys, which lasted from June, 1924, to April, 1925. Mr. Whitlock fixed his headquarters at the place, just below the junction of the Margaret and Fitzroy Rivers, known as the "Crossing," where the telegraph line from Derby to Hall's Creek crosses the Fitzroy. He camped also in the Oscar Ranges some miles north of the "Crossing," and at Leopold Downs Station, forty miles to the north-west.

On the conclusion of the trip Mr. Whitlock took up residence in Perth and was thinking of more fields to conquer, only to be shocked by the news of the death, in May, 1927, of the man who had so successfully employed him in the enlargement of our knowledge of the ornithology of the western side of the continent of Australia, not to mention also the good results of the single trip to the central portion.

Thus ended Mr. Whitlock's travels, but present members of the R.A.O.U. know how successful he has been in the more sedentary occupation of the collection of those members of the Petrel family which have become victims of the gales which blow from time to time on our western coast. In this way the Kerguelen Petrel was added to the Australian list, and another member of the family—*Puffinus leptorhynchus*—is still the subject of much discussion.

While living in Perth Mr. Whitlock wrote many articles of a popular nature for local journals and also became a very much appreciated broadcaster on the bird-life of the State. Mr. Whitlock attended the 1927 R.A.O.U. Congress held in Perth and read a scholarly paper on "Some Peculiarities in the Distribution of Birds in W.A.," wherein is apparent the specialized knowledge of that subject which his travels have enabled him to acquire. At that Congress he was elected member of council for Western Australia,

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which position he held till 1932, when he retired, at his own request, in favour of the writer. Finally, it is to be recorded that at the 1933 Congress Mr. Whitlock was elected an Honorary Member of the R.A.O.U. in recognition of the long and valuable services he has rendered to Australian ornithology.

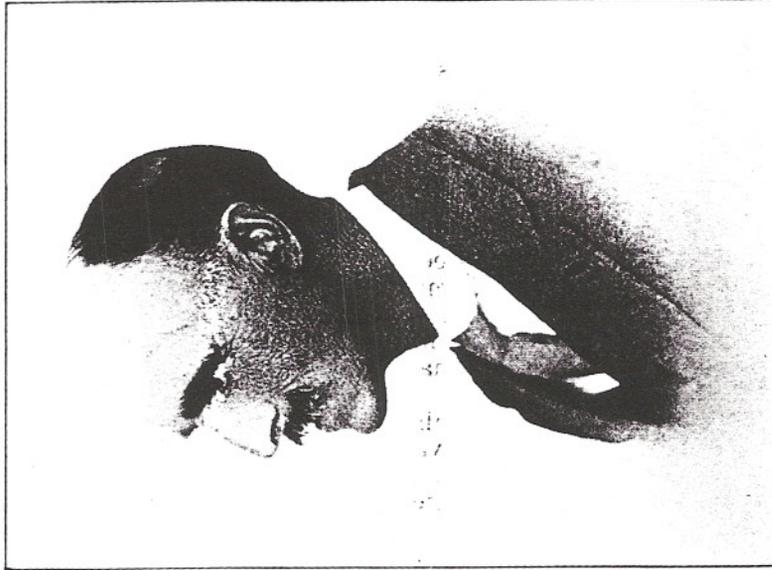
Multiple Nest-building.—During a visit to my brother's farm at Cranbourne, Vic., in November, 1939, the manager informed me that he had noticed two pairs of Swallows flying in and out of some new cow-bails, with nesting material. The bails had been erected about a fortnight and two nests were almost completed at the time of my visit. Eggs were laid by one pair of birds in due course.

The point of interest which struck me was the visible evidence of other nests that had been started and abandoned at various stages. Altogether there were eleven efforts ranging from a small daub of mud to the completed structure. My own observations regarding the number of pairs confirmed those of the manager, but whether one pair built only one nest, the other nests being started and not completed by a second pair, I am unable to say. It seems clear, however, that one or both pairs engaged in multiple nest-building.

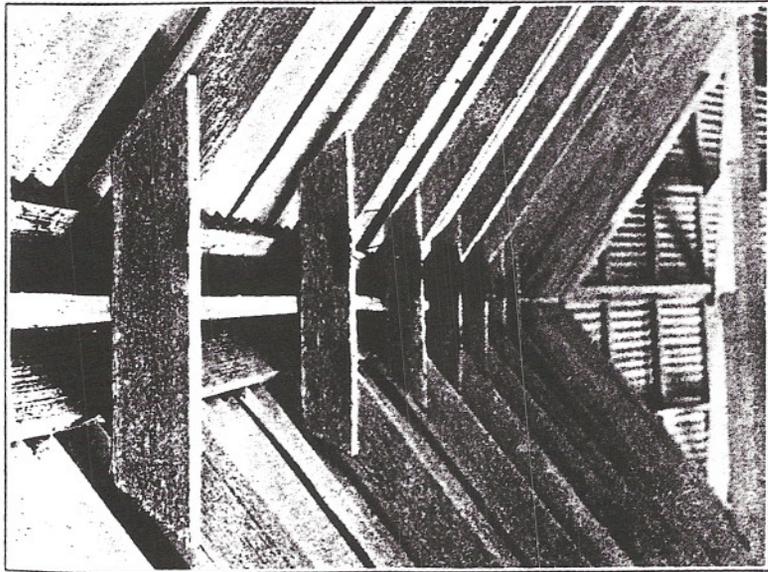
In *The Emu* (vol. XXXIX, p. 243) I recorded the building of eighteen nests in one season by a pair of Willie-Wagtails and also referred to some American records of this unusual nesting behaviour. Fisher, in *Birds As Animals*, mentions some English examples and attributes them to "direct (but unusual) environmental factors." "A Dipper observed by Rowan," he writes, "failed entirely to cope with the problem caused by a bridge which formed a number of identical pigeon-holes, each one equally suitable as a nesting site. The bird was apparently unable to choose between one hole and another and had nests at various stages in nearly every one." Other records include a Blackbird which built a series of nests between the rungs of a horizontal ladder hung against a wall, a Swallow which laid in two duplicate nests eight inches apart, and a Pied Wagtail which built six nests in ventilation holes in a wall. Jourdain states that this habit has been recorded of the Song-Thrush, Robin, Redstart, and Chaffinch.

The significant facts of multiple nest-building are that the nests are built in artificial sites provided by man and that these sites are contiguous and very similar in appearance. The explanation most generally favoured is that the birds are confused by the identical nature of the sites and learn only gradually to concentrate on and finish a particular nest. It will be noticed that two nests have been started on some cross-beams in the bails but they may be the work of two different birds. A very competent ornithologist

R2462/11



Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock.



Unfinished nests of Swallows, illustrating multiple nest-building.

Photo, by N. L. Roberts.

“A REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE . . . ON MATTERS ORNITHOLOGICAL”

Dr D. L. Serventy: The doyen of Australian ornithology.

Dominic Louis Serventy was born at Brown Hill, Western Australia on 28 March 1904. He had a brilliant scholastic career at the University of Western Australia and later at Cambridge. On his return to Australia in 1934 he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Zoology at the University of Western Australia but left in 1937 to join the Fisheries Division of the C.S.I.R.O. In 1951 he transferred to the Wildlife Research Division to become Principal Research Scientist and Officer-in-Charge of the Western Australian Field Station, from which he retired in 1969.

His first published articles appeared in the *Western Mail*, Perth, and from March 1923 to September 1926 he contributed “Bush Notes” to the *Farmer*, Perth under the nom-de-plume of ‘Miletus.’ Since then hundreds of his scientific publications have appeared in Australian and international journals covering many aspects of natural history, principally ornithology. In 1948, in collaboration with H. M. Whittell, he published *Birds of Western Australia* which in 1976 reached its fifth edition. In 1971, with his brother Vincent and John Warham, he published *The handbook of Australian sea-birds*. Sea-birds have provided an abiding interest for Dr Serventy and his long-term work on the Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* is a classic.

From State Secretary for W. A. Branch of RAOU he rose to become President in 1947, and was made a Fellow in 1949. He is a Life Member and former President of the Western Australian Naturalists’ Club, and held the position of Editor from 1947 until 1980. In addition he has held office and acted as representative of some fifteen or so Australian and overseas committees and councils.

Understandably and deservedly many honours have been bestowed upon him, notably his appointment in 1972 as Ridder in the Most Excellent Order of the Golden Ark by his Royal Highness The Prince of the Netherlands, for outstanding service in the cause of nature conservation. He was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1956 and the Tasmanian Royal Society Medal for 1970. America, England, Germany, Argentina, France and South Africa have also seen fit to recognize his contributions to science. With his wonderful sense of history Dr Serventy has meticulously preserved many files of correspondence with ornithologists of the day, and has recorded invaluable biographical data in his carefully researched obituaries. A great lover of books, he has gathered a superb library. It is therefore of great interest to present the letters initiating his correspondence with F. B. Lawson Whitlock which was to last for 31 years, until Whitlock’s death in 1953. These letters, with many others, are now preserved in the RAOU Archives.

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F. B. Lawson Whitlock (1860 — 1953).

Frederick Bulstrode Lawson Whitlock was born in Nottingham, England on 3 June 1860, and educated at Loughborough Grammar School in Leicestershire. His interest in natural history began at an early age and, like countless young boys before him, he made collections of butterflies and of birds’ eggs. After leaving school he worked as an accountant and in insurance. He commenced publishing articles on birds in his twenties and went on to produce several books. For a time he was Assistant Editor to H. Kirke Swann of *The Ornithologist*, so that when he arrived in Western Australia in 1901 to make his home there, his was already an established name in ornithology. He came to Australia for reasons of health and the rigorous life he led as a collector speaks wonders for our climate!

By August 1901 he was off on his first trip, prospecting. His companion was one L.F. Von Wieldt, who later joined the staff of the Western Australian Museum and put Whitlock in touch with their Honorary Ornithologist, A. W. Milligan. Milligan persuaded the Museum to finance some collecting

trips for Whitlock, and so began almost thirty years of travel, principally in Western Australia and often in extremely remote regions.

In 1908 he was engaged by H. L. White and, until White's death in 1927, Whitlock's main efforts were on his behalf although he also collected skins for Gregory M. Mathews. Whitlock's material is now in the H.L. White Collection, held by the Museum of Victoria, in the Mathews Collection in the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and in the Western Australian Museum.

Whitlock was the first to obtain many nests and eggs, and in 1909 discovered the Grey Honeyeater *Conophila whitei*. His own name is perpetuated in several species. He was an Honorary Life Member of the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union and of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club.

After retiring from active collecting he confined his efforts to searching for beach-washed specimens near his home at Bunbury, and entomology became his main interest. He spent his last years there with his daughter. He died on 15 June 1953.

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TESS KLOOT

Gosnells Rd.,
Waddington
11 Feb. 1922

South of the Gosnells Rd, and extending to the hills is a forest of jarrah, but of course, much of it has been cut down in the settled parts. In between (the area I know best) the soil is a sandy loam with a clay subsoil which prevents the water from the hills, in winter time, from soaking in. The result is that during the rainy season much of this portion of the district is under water, while in summertime none is to be had and the ground is as hard as concrete. In winter blue cranes are very common about here and they retreat to the swamps in summer. Along the Canning river and in the valleys opening out into the plain occur rich tracts of chocolate-red soil suitable for intense culture. The principal trees found in these "flats" are wandoos which occur chiefly close to the hills, the rest of the flats are mostly tree-less. As far as birds are concerned the hills are very interesting. In the thick jarrah forests, birds which are not found in the plains, are numerous. E.g. parrots, rufous tree creepers, redwinged blue wrens, bell magpies etc. To the west of the railway line are a series of swamps, but I do not go there often. A new reservoir (Bickley bk. Service) has been constructed last year and it has attracted many water birds.

Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock,
"Chiltern", Tudor,

Dear Sir,

I am a young member of the RAOU (eighteen years of age next month) and though I am greatly interested in birds yet I have no companion of similar tastes, in my district. In response to a letter of mine asking for a personal correspondent in this state our secretary (Mr. Z. Gray) sent me the addresses of a few persons likely to become suitable correspondents. Your name was among those mentioned and I would be most gratified if you would consent to a regular correspondence between us on matters ornithological.

I go to the Perth Modern School and live on an orchard near the foot of the hills at Waddington and no doubt if you intend to write to me, you will be interested in a short description of the district.

The township is situated on the S.W.R., 10 miles from Perth, and about 3 miles from the Darling Ranges (see sketch next page). My "Beat" extends from a mile or so north of the Bickley brook to the north, to the Canning River in the south, and from the railway line in the west to several miles into the hills in the east. Of course I make periodic excursions into the surrounding country. North of the Bickley brook the prevalent timbers are banksia and jarrah nearer to the hills, and the soil is sandy.

My local "checklist" contains the names of 58 birds but many have yet to be identified (mostly arboreal, wary, or nocturnal species).

Hoping that there is no obstacle in the way of our regular correspondence and eagerly waiting your reply.

Your fellow-member,
Dominic Louis Serventy R.A.O.U.

R2462/14

Tudor
via Albany
27th Feb. 1922

Mr. D. L. Serventy, R.A.O.U.

Dear Sir,

I was glad to receive a letter from a young member of the R.A.O.U. I can well remember the time when I was a beginner, but I was very young indeed when I was first attracted by the [beauty?] of birds eggs and nests. I was in England then and ornithologising was not looked upon with favour in those districts where game preserving was the order of the day.

However as time went on I learned how to dodge unfriendly gamekeepers and my love for the science grew in spite of all. But here the freedom is just lovely.

I know your district slightly having put in a few months some years back at the Armidale side of the Jandakot area. I have been up the Canning River too by boat, but never into the hills, except a brief trip to [Kalamunda?]. The hills look very inviting. I suppose the birds inhabiting them are well known but there is always the chance of meeting with a distinguished visitor, driven from other parts by drought or other agency.

Jandakot did not impress me much, but at the lake were a few waders, including banded stilts. Some of the undisturbed swamps, with a good growth of reeds might harbour Harriers, [Coots] and crakes — also a *Megalimus* that might pay to look up. A bird I used to see or hear every day near Lake Jandakot was the wattle bird — []. It has a very curious series of notes. I had not a good opportunity for investigating what was really to be found there, however.

In the ranges, small birds inhabiting the tree tops might repay investigation; especially any with [? and no attractive] call-notes.

Down here we have a variety of country. I am living at a farm too, which includes a small orchard. I am situated at the Eastern end of Wilson's Inlet (Salt) a good haunt for wading birds at certain seasons. Ten miles away are the remains of the great Karri forests at Denmark. Around my home are belts of Karri or rather ridges, but the predominant trees are Red Gum, Jarrah, [Banksia] and Ti-tree. We have also large black-bog flats, very wet in the winter, but the haunt of Emu, wrens, quail, and a few pairs of Ground parrots. Not many genera such as magpies, Butcher birds, Honey-Eaters (*Meliphaga*) are quite absent. We

occasionally have Sea Eagles, Ospreys and other visitors of [] species.

I shall be glad to hear from you at any time and to help you as far as is in the power of a very busy man.

Yours faithfully

F. Lawson Whitlock.

Waddington,
11th March 1922.

Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock,

Dear Sir,

I received your very interesting letter last week. I was pleased to see that this locality is not wholly unknown to you. My early schooldays were spent at Armadale, & about 11 years ago we lived for a short time at the Banjup side of Jandakot. The house was right out in the bush & because of the distance & my approaching school age, we did not occupy it for long. But it was (or seemed to me then) a fine place for birds, & other wild creatures. Every morning robins, willy wagtails & other small birds would throng on to the veranda & back-yard picking up crumbs & other tit-bits. Sometimes they would venture into an adjoining semi-detached room & on occasions I took advantage of this habit. After closing the door, it did not take long to capture the intruder. In this way I once caught a fantail & in the scuffle its long tail feathers came away. When released from an improvised cage some days later, the little chap still persisted in haunting the veranda & was familiar for a long while afterwards. On the whole, however I agree with you that the sandplains of Jandakot are poor in Birdlife. The hills however are of great interest for in them, one meets with birds now rarely seen in the coastal plains. Taking my own locality as an example; treecreepers, Bell magpies, red-winged blue wrens (*M. elegans*), Red-tailed Black Cockatoos (*C. Nass*) & King parrots I have never seen in the flats & Shrike-Robins, tree runners (*Neositta*), white shafted fantails, rosellas, "twentyeights" & white naped honeyeaters (*Melithreptus chloropsis*) but rarely so. In addition Banded blue wrens (*M. splendens*), whistlers (*Paetycephala*), spinebills, & Broad-tailed tits (*Apicalis*) are more common in the hills than in the flats. On the other hand magpies, sacred kingfishers, cuckoos (*Pallid* & *Bronze*), Red wattle birds & crows appear to be more frequent in the

plains: while I have never seen kestrels, magpie larks, swallows, chats, "willy wagtails" & ground-larks in the hills.

As you say, strange species are sometimes noted. A few weeks ago I saw a large wild Turkey (Bustard) in the flats, only about a quarter of a mile from Waddington railway station. Also resident species are still being listed. Thus up to short time ago, I thought that all the Maluri found in the hills belonged to *M. splendens*, however one day I noticed a peculiarity in the colouration of one bird & on further investigation I found a small flock of *Melurus elegans* in amongst the reeds & tangled vegetation of a small creek. This information was of interest to the Perth Museum, & a week or so later I accompanied Mr. Lipfert to the spot but only *M. splendens* was obtained, the Red Winged Maluri evidently had gone further up the creek & we had not time enough to follow them.

The south coast country, especially Nornalup, has received much attention from the local press recently & descriptions of the inlets are now appearing in the "West Australian". The descriptions of the country there, which I have never seen, make one long to visit it.

I was surprised to see that magpies & other common species of further north are absent from Wilson's inlet. Mr. Glanert tells me, however, that Bell magpies or "squeakers" which are rather rare up here, are so common in the south as to take the place of ordinary magpies. Tudor, I think, is not far from one of the recorded localities of *Atrichornis clamosa*. Do you think this peculiar & interesting bird still exists? The balance of evidence seems to be that it is now amongst the lost. Your note concerning ground parrots is interesting, as I had previously thought that they were extinct.

During the last month I have been observing the migratory habits of bee eaters particularly to see if they leave in two lots as they do in the east. Last year I found out that the first flocks left about the 4th of Feb & the second party on about the 20th. This year I had similar results. I would like to know if your observations confirm mine, also I am curious of whether bee eaters leave Australia for the northern islands or remain on the continent. In spring the birds arrive about October 6th in the Waddington district.

In closing I wish to express my appreciation of the fact that in the intervals of a busy life, you find time to write to me.

Yours sincerely,

D. A. Serventy

Waddington
23 July 1922.

Mr. F. Lawson Whitlock,
Tudor

Dear Sir,

I wrote to you soon after the receipt of your interesting letter of Feb. 27, but not having a reply I concluded that either you were absent on an expedition or that my letter had miscarried. If the latter has occurred this explanation will remove any suspicion of ingratitude which you may naturally feel.

One phase of bird study in which I am interested at present is whether crows (*C. coronoides*) migrate. My attention was first attracted a couple of years ago one December when I noticed large flocks flying southwards. The following December, observing the same thing I commenced keeping a record of passing flocks of crows. Though my opportunities were limited to weekends and holidays yet the records show the general trend of migration (for such I am convinced it is, and not irregular wandering) during the different months.

One peculiar fact is that the movement continues with varying intensity throughout the year, excepting the breeding season. During December and January the movement is towards the south, but during the end of the latter month birds are seen beginning the northern journey which continues till about the end of August when the migration ceases. During the winter months the flocks are smaller and not so much in evidence as during the winter. However this movement is not so regular as would appear from the above, odd birds are seen flying northward in summer and southwards in winter, contrary to the general direction in those months.

As we are situated at the foot of the ranges, it may be that we are in the line of migration, the hills serving as a landmark, or barrier to extension eastwards as crows are essentially birds of the open plain. These records extend from Dec. 1920, and if there "is anything in it" I intend to make it the subject of my maiden paper to the "Emu". I have examined the various volumes on ornithology at the library but can find no mention of the phenomenon.

Now sir, you being the foremost field-naturalist in the state, and having so great experience in most parts of it, I would be pleased if you could supply me with any information concerning this subject, if it has ever been brought before your notice; and if so whether it extends throughout the state or is only a local movement.

I see by the last "Emu" that Mr. R. Hall is bringing out another book on the migration and distribution of Australian birds, which may possibly deal with this subject, but as yet I have not seen the work.

Yours faithfully,

D. A. Serventy.

Mill Stream Station
NW
29th Aug. 1922

via R

Mr D. L. Serventy

Dear Sir,

You will see by the above address, I am up in the Nth. West being on another scientific expedition on behalf of Mr. H. L. White.

I got your letter dated 11th March in due course & fully intended to reply to it. I think you will forgive me for not doing so when you learn that in April I had a very bad driving smash. I was much cut about the head & face & my right arm & shoulder, also badly injured. I was laid up or partially so for a good many weeks & any exertion or task that I could avoid I was glad to postpone.

Your letter refers to *Malurus Elegans*. When I first took up my block of land at Wilson's Inlet, this wren was not by any means a rarity & I even found a nest not far away from my house. But since so many settlers have come into the district & there is so much burning of scrub (much of it quite useless to do so) the species has now become somewhat rare. Also bush cats have greatly increased to the detriment of local bird life. I consider *M. elegans* one of our most beautiful wrens, & it must not be forgotten it is peculiar to the west.

Bee-eaters rarely occur on the South Coast though I [have] occasionally seen them.

In migrating possibly the birds of the [] leave first strange as it may appear this is the case in Europe with most of the waders receding in the far north. In the tropics I think the bee eater is more or less resident. I have never failed to find pairs near [] in the rivers. No doubt you know the rains in the NW occur chiefly in the summer months so insect life is plentiful. I saw a bee-eater snap up a white butterfly the other day.

Magpies are very rare at Wilson's inlet but the "Squeaker" (*Strepera*) is only too plentiful & does a lot of damage to the fruit especially to the apples in March.

I am sadly afraid the noisy scrub bird has gone for good. People keep seeing & hearing it so they say, but I am the only one who has had no luck in this respect. We have several pairs of birds that live at the house; including robins, scrub robins (*Eopsaltria*) & Fantails (*Rhipidura*). One of the latter often comes right into the house & will snatch a fly off ones shoulder. On one occasion it perched on my knee as I was drinking a cup of tea.

I am glad to learn you are contemplating a paper on the migrations of crows in the "Emu". Don't be afraid to state what you think to be a fact. The habit of birds differ in a huge country like Australia, with its diversified conditons, at home crows only come in the hot weather say from January to the first rains in April. Should a good rain come in March they clear out at once. They are an awful nuisance in the orchards. We had a flock of thirty or so last year. They caught me busy or absent one day & utterly spoiled a fine tree full of ripening apricots. I should say the migration of crows is produced by scarcity or otherwise of food. During the hot weather the ground gets baked so hard that they cannot dig & search for their natural food. Magpies turn over bark or small pieces of wood or moss where they find centipedes & such creatures hiding. The crow likes his food [providing?] for him in the shape of maggots or semi putrid flesh, hence their abundance around homesteads at sheep stations. But there is not much that comes amiss to a hungry crow. Personally I have never seen flocks of crows migrating in Australia.

But I have seen the hooded crows arriving on the English coasts in large numbers from Northern Europe. Curiously enough English rooks migrate in some numbers to the continent of Europe & the continental rooks winter in England. But the subject of migration proves, the more it is studied, to be a very complex one. I hope Robt. Hall will produce a better book on the subject, than his so called "Key to the birds of Australia". A book of little value indeed to the field naturalist & one you need not wish to possess, for it leaves one as a rule in more doubt than before, when one tries to identify a species by its aid.

If you have the chance try to make out if the migrating crows you see are old birds with white eyes or younger ones with brown eyes. Of course one wants to be pretty near or obtain the use of a good field-glass to be able to do so. Also estimate the [height?] & direction of flight & how long the migration lasts. There are plenty of crows around the home stead here but just now they seem to be immature birds.

I shall be passing through Perth sometime in November I expect. Perhaps we could arrange to meet at the Museum & have a chat.

Please excuse more. I am sitting on the ground writing this on my knee.

Yours faithfully

F. Lawson Whitlock

Waddington
8 Oct 1922

Dear Mr. Whitlock,

Your most welcome letter reached me during the week. I was sorry to hear of your accident, but am glad that it did not prevent your journey to the N.W. Millstream station is not far from Wallal & was probably in the belt of totality during the

recent eclipse of the sun. If so you may have observed the effect of the phenomenon on animal life. The Cordilly (or Cordillo) Downs expedition reported that "some time before totality, great numbers of galahs came flying in from all directions, being evidently perturbed by the diminishing sunlight. Camels & other animals at the station showed uneasiness." (Vide Press)

I look forward to your visit to Perth & hope that I may have the pleasure of accompanying you for a day's rambling in the Darling Ranges. Unfortunately I have to sit for an examination during the third week in November so if you chance to arrive during that period I shall be unable to meet you.

However, hoping for the best & wishing you success up north;

I am, yours faithfully,

D. L. Serventy