

NOTE ON THE BIRDS MET WITH ON THE SWAN RIVER BY
VLAMINGH IN 1697.

By

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When I wrote Part I. of my paper on "The History of Zoology in Western Australia" (Journal of W.A. Nat. Hist. and Sci. Soc. V., p. 49), I had to rely for the narrative of Vlamingh's voyage on the translation given by Major (Early Voyages to Terra Australis, p. 120).

This is as follows: "On the 11th (January), at break of day, we again ascended the river, and saw many swans (our boat knocked over nine or ten), some rotganzen, geese, some divers, etc." (p. 124); and on the next page: "The men, the birds, the swans, the rotganzen, koopganzen, the geese, the cockatoos, the parroquets, etc., all fled at the sight of us."

Mr. F. E. Blaauw was good enough to inform me that "rotganzen" was an old Dutch word for cormorants, and that "koopganzen" was probably a misprint for "kropganzen," meaning pelicans.

In my paper I therefore substituted cormorants for rotganzen and pelicans for koopganzen.

Since then I have been fortunate enough to obtain a copy of the original Dutch account printed at Amsterdam in 1701, which Major states is "exceedingly scarce."

In this the two passages already cited stand as follows: "Den 11^{den} met den dag, voeren wy de Rivier weder op, en zagen veele Swaanen (daar onze Schuit'er wel negen of tien af schoot) Rotganzen, Duikers, enz;" and "'t Was ook alles schigtig voor ons, zo Menschen als Gevogelte, Swaanen, Rotganzen, Kropganzen, Kake-toeën, Parkieten, enz."

It will be seen in the first place that Mr. Blaauw was right in his surmise that koopganzen was a misprint for kropganzen.

Secondly we find that there is no mention of geese in the original. Evidently Major's document should have read "rotganzen (geese?)," and again "rotganzen, koopganzen (geese?)."

Now there can be no question that the most striking birds likely to be seen on the river at the present day are Cormorants, Pelicans and Black Swans, but in writing the passage before, I wondered what sort of geese could have been seen there, and specu-

lated in my own mind as to whether the Cape Barren Goose might formerly have extended as far as the Swan River. This problem is now settled satisfactorily.

The only question that still remains is as to the identity of the "Duikers," translated "Divers," which are mentioned. I think there can be very little doubt that these were Musk Ducks, which are sometimes seen on the river. The only other diving birds possible are Grebes, but I am not aware that these are ever seen there, though common enough on adjacent lakes and swamps.



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