ing gold mining township of Gympie, which, in its early days, did such good service in lifting the colony out of the slough of despond engendered by the depression of 1866, severely felt and long remembered by many of the residents of the city of Brisbane in the earlier days of our now prosperous colony.

NEST AND EGGS OF THE JABIRU;

BY

W. T. WHITE, Esq.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE;

BY

HENRY TRYON.

(*Read on 6th August, 1886.*)

Our Australian Jabiru, though never met with in Victoria or South Australia, is generally distributed throughout the remainder of the continent, being for the most part restricted to the coast districts, and seldom found more than 300 miles inland. It is nowhere plentiful, though it may be occasionally seen in some numbers about such estuarine waters as those of the Herbert River. Difficult to approach, its large size and conspicuously handsome appearance render it a favourite mark for the sportsman's rifle, so much so that already it is a bird unheard of in the neighbourhood of settled districts. That the Jabiru is doomed to extinction, unless steps are taken to prohibit its slaughter, there can be little doubt; the description, however, of its habits and representation of its appearance given by the Nestor of Australian naturalists, Dr. G. Bennett, in his "Wanderings," not to speak of the accounts of less popular writers, will help to perpetuate its memory. Its history, however, is not yet completely written, since its nidification and the character of its eggs are subjects which do not appear to have been

dealt with by those who have especially written on these features in Australian bird-life, such as Gould, Ramsay, Campbell, and others.

The Australian Jabiru, until recently, has been considered, by writers other than Gould, to be a distinct species from Xenorhynchus asiaticus, *Lath.*, the Indian Jabiru. Salvadori, however, points out * that this is not the case, and further remarks that naturalists in thinking so have been misled by the description of the bird as given by Gould, in which that writer states that the feathers of the back are black, instead of white, as they undoubtedly are, having wrongly regarded the scapularies as dorsal plumes. Did this character exist, it were correct to consider the Australian species as being distinct from the Indian, and not identical with it, as Gould appears to have done.

Students of Australian ornithology, in the light only of the ordinary text-books on the subject, and unfamiliar with the views of Salvadori, will, however, take time to adopt his correction, and will welcome the following notes as helping to complete the history of our Jabiru, rather than appropriate for this purpose what already does so, viz., that which has been written from a similar point of view concerning the Indian bird.

There are yet other considerations why it is desirable to make this record.

As Salvadori also has pointed out, Xenorhynchus asiaticus, *Lath.* (for thus in future must we designate the Australian Jabiru), forms two colonies, which are for the most part distinct, one colony (with which we are immediately concerned) comprising Australia, and extending to the islands of Torres Straits and to the south-east of New Guinea, the other colony comprising India, Arracan, Tenasserim, and Ceylon. It would be interesting, then, to establish the fact whether or not the birds which are restricted to these separate regions present differences of habit, which would probably be the case if this remarkable fact in geographical distribution were of very long stand-

* Ornithologia della Papuasia e delle Molluche, Pt. 3, p. 378. Torino, 1882.

ing, even though from the point of view of their organization the birds were identical, and what habit more susceptible of comparison than that concerning incubation.

We must also bear in mind the difficulty of access to any published description relating to the nidification and eggs of the Indian Jabiru. Not to overlook Latham's meagre notice,* the only detailed description existing is that given by Hume in his "Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds."†—a work scarcely to be met with in any library in Australia.

[The nest of the Jabiru bears great resemblance to the nest of the eagle *(Aquilla audax)* in both size and appearance, but it is always so situated that there is nothing above it. The bird selects a lofty tree, generally one with the top broken off, close to the margin of a swamp or lagoon, and on the highest point of it builds a pile of sticks about three feet in depth and four in diameter; a thin layer of grass or rushes is placed upon the sticks, and upon this surface, which is almost perfectly flat, the eggs (two in number) are laid. I am of opinion that the Jabiru, like the Native Companion, does not lay more than two eggs,‡ and like most of the waders breeds during the rainy season.

I am unable to say what the period of incubation is, but both sexes share in the process.

The eggs were obtained in the neighbourhood of Ingham, on the Herbert River, in the month of March last year. The nest from which they were taken was built of sticks in the very top of a tall tree growing near a marsh.—W.T.W.]

The following is Hume's description of the eggs of the Indian bird :—

§ "In shape they are typically broad ovals, compressed towards one end, so as to have a slightly pyriform tendency; elongated ovals and almost spherical varieties are not uncommon. The eggs are dull and almost glossless, but though the texture is somewhat

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* "General History of Birds," Vol. IX., p. 17. Winchester, 1824.

† *Op. cit.,* Vol. III., p. 607. Calcutta, 1875.

‡ Concerning the number of eggs which the clutch of the Indian bird contains, Mr. Allan Hume remarks—"Four is certainly the regular complement of eggs, and one of the four is often bad, so that they much more often rear three than four young ones." (*Op. cit.* p. 607).—H.T.

§ "Nest and Eggs of Indian Birds."—Rough draft. Part —, p. 60. Calcutta, 1873.

coarse, they are fairly smooth to the touch; when fresh they are nearly pure white, with only the faintest possible bluish-grey tinge, but after being a few days in the nest they become soiled and tanned and assume that dingy yellowish-white or pale yellowish-brown tint so characteristic of storks' eggs. In length the eggs vary from 2·65″ to 3·13″, and in breadth from 1·98″ to 2·3″; but the average of 45 eggs is 2·91″ by 2·12″."

The two Ingham specimens may be fairly considered to be included in the above definition of Hume. No 1 measures 2.926″ (75 mm.) in length and 2·106″ (54 mm.) in breadth, and is stained to a slightly darker colour than No. 2. The latter measures 2·974″ (76 mm.) in length and 2·184″ (56 mm.) in breadth, and is also more nearly elliptical than No. 1. Both eggs have their surfaces much smoother about the middle region than at the poles.

ON FISH ACCLIMATIZATION IN QUEENSLAND;

BY

D. O'CONNOR, Esq.

(Read on 6th August, 1886.)

I HAVE been requested to give you an account of a recent attempt to acclimatize English fish in our waters.

Fish acclimatization, although considered in every part of the civilised world a subject of importance, has hitherto received little or no attention in Queensland, except from the gentlemen whose names are mentioned in this communication. At the request of Mr. R. B. Sheridan, M.L.A., who obtained the necessary funds, and kindly assisted by Sir Samuel Griffith, who gave me an official letter to the Chief Secretary of Victoria, I proceeded to Ballarat a short time ago, and through the generosity of the Mayor and the Acclimatization Society of Ballarat, received about a hundred small fish which were placed in six tins of the approved