

pair of Pipits in a newly-ploughed paddock, and on the 18th again, at the same place, feeding in company with White-fronted Chats (*Ephthianura albifrons*) and Robins. During last week also I noted a solitary Pipit on two occasions, so that a few stragglers have remained, as usually happens. Mr. H. C. Thompson heard a Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis rufulus*) calling on 19th May, near Launceston, but on the coast none has been observed by me since April.

The White-bearded Honey-eater (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*) frequents the Cape wattle of our gardens during the winter season, and, as this tree is now in full bloom, it presents a scene of great animation in the day, with the lively movements of this fine species, sometimes chasing away a Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) or a Fantail (*Rhipidura diemenensis*), or dashing through the branchlets after one of its own kin. There is a male in splendid plumage which sits on the topmost twig of a weeping willow that adjoins the wattle in the early morning sunshine, from which point of vantage he makes frequent sallies to catch insects, which begin to fly as the sun's warmth moves them.

While in a clump of small bush in the middle of May I noticed a party of Strong-billed Honey-eaters (*Melithreptus validirostris*), a species I had not seen about Devonport for a considerable time. The birds were engaged in running up the stems and branches of small gums, hunting for insects and spiders under the loose bark, and looked very engaging with their black caps and white neck-rings.—H. STUART DOVE. 8/6/12.

---

## Forgotten Feathers.

LEWIN, "BIRDS OF NEW HOLLAND, 1808."

BY GREGORY M. MATHEWS, F.R.S.E.

IN 1808 there was published by J. White, Fleet-street, a book on Australian ornithology, its full title being :—

"Birds/of/New Holland/with their/Natural History/Collected, engraved, and faithfully painted after nature/by/John William Lewin, A.L.S./of Parramatta, New South Wales./ Vol I/ London/printed for the Author;/and published by/J. White, Fleet Street; and S. Bagster, 81 Strand/1808/ The letter-press by T. Bensley, Bold Court."

This work contained 22 pages of letter-press and 18 plates. The plates (except No. 9), published as the Act directs, have a date (different days of March, 1808), and "J. W. Lewin, New South Wales." They are numbered with Roman numerals, except plates 3 and 15, which are in Arabic figures.

At the head of the letter-press to each plate is a Latin name, given, as we are told on the title page, by T. Bensley. Lewin is



generally credited with having given these names, but in future we must give credit where it is due.\*

The preface, written by a brother of the author, is as follows:—

“This little Volume is the beginning of a Work which is intended to comprehend the whole of the Birds of New Holland as they may come to the Author’s hands, and which will be continued in succession, he having been nine years in that country, travelling, collecting, and painting for this purpose.

“As it is impossible at once to bring together every Species of a Genus, that may be found in a country that abounds so much in novelty, our Author intends to vary the subject in each Volume, but care will be taken, when one or more Birds of a Genus may be figured in a Volume, to give the Generic Character, or a reference to where it may have been given before, and the whole will be connected by Indices, in proper places, so as to make the Work useful, scientific, and complete. We have retrenched the descriptions of the Birds in this Work, from what was intended by the Author to be given, because we consider them dry, and unnecessary in a work where every species is beautifully and correctly figured; and we have confined ourselves to such particulars as seem to be useful and necessary. We trust that, in thus deviating from the usual practice of Ornithologists, we shall not be condemned as having improperly lessened the expense of the Work. Sure we are that such a body of dry descriptions as usually accompanies the little quantity of useful Natural History which is generally given with each Species, is both tedious and disgusting, and so unmeaning to the general Reader as to make Ornithology appear pedantic; whereas in our way of treating the subject, we flatter ourselves that the Ornithologists will more easily identify the Species, the general Reader will peruse the Letter-press with pleasure, and this branch of the Sciences will obtain admirers and advocates.

“THOMAS LEWIN.”

Then follows:—“A List of Subscribers/Printed by Particular Desire./ Subscribers in New South Wales./ His Excellency William Bligh,” &c., &c.

67 copies were subscribed for in New South Wales, the names of which subscribers were obtained by Lewin himself in 1806, and 6 others were obtained in London.

Lewin apparently sent over 8 more engraved plates, but these did not receive a scientific name when published in 1822, when the original 18 were again published (re-issued), after having the date rubbed off.†

The following quotation shows that Lewin was still working:—  
“In April, 1815, the Governor himself, with Mrs. Macquarie,

\* To credit Bensley with the authorship of the names would be erroneous. Bensley was the printer of the letter-press.—E. A. PETHERICK.

† The Latin names in the text were also omitted.—E. A. PETHERICK.



accompanied by his principal officers and Mr. Lewin, painter and Naturalist, set out on a progress to view what he called 'his latest conquest,' *i.e.*, the road across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst."

J. W. Lewin died in 1819, and was buried in New South Wales.

The plates in this work were the first natural history subjects executed in Australia.\* In fact, only one set of engravings was done before—some views on copper (the copper being taken from a ship's bottom).

[Mr. E. A. Petherick, the Australian bibliographer, was present when Mr Mathews' remarks on John Lewin were read. In view of the interest attached to the paper, and that it may be historically correct, Mr. Petherick offered to correct some misstatements, hence the foot-notes, which Mr. Mathews will no doubt accept in the same kindly spirit as was offered by Mr. Petherick.—EDS.]

---

### From Magazines, &c.

**Great Brown Kingfisher Breeding in Captivity.**—The Avicultural Society's medal has been awarded to Mr. Cosgrave for breeding the Laughing Jackass (*Dacelo gigas*)—*vide* *Avic. Mag.*, Ser. III., vol. iii., p. 88.

\* \* \*

**New Genus of Australian Bird.**—In *The Ibis* (1912), p. 120, Mr. A. J. North, C.M.Z.S., proposes a new genus, *Trichodere*, for *Ptilotis cockerelli*. Gould pointed out that this bird "possesses characters peculiar to itself to demand a distinct generic appellation," and Mr. North adds:—"While differing in minor characters from *Glycyphila*, *Meliornis*, and *Ptilotis*, it may be readily distinguished from all these, and every other genus of the family *Meliphagidæ*, by the hair-like appearance of the sides of the feathers on the throat and fore-neck." The wonder is that so distinctive a bird was not separated generically ere this.

\* \* \*

**Hooded Parrakeets** (*Psephotus cucullata*). — Members of the R.A.O.U. who attended the Sydney session last year will recollect seeing a beautiful pair of these birds alive at the Australian Museum. Concerning a pair that nested in England, Mr. H. B. Astley, writing in *The Avicultural Magazine*, February, 1912, p. 122, states:—"In November, 1911, my pair of this lovely variety of Golden-shouldered Parrakeets nested in a bird-room, the hen laying three eggs and sitting well, but the eggs did not

\* Lewin previously produced a work on the insects of New South Wales (London, 1805), containing 18 plates, dated 1803 and 1804. These were the earliest engravings executed in Australia. The set of engravings on copper from a ship's bottom (by Preston) were first published in 1814.—E. A. PETHERICK.



Mathews, Gregory Macalister and Lewin, Thomas. 1912. "Lewin, "Birds of New Holland, 1808"." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 12(1), 49–51. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu912049>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/81122>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu912049>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/379937>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

**Sponsored by**

Smithsonian

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.