

News and Views

The British Trust for Ornithology

AN important step towards the better organisation of field studies of bird life has been taken by the recent initiation of a British Trust for Ornithology. There is probably no country that has so many competent field ornithologists as Great Britain, but so far there has been no centre to give scientific direction to their efforts, to co-ordinate their observations, and to arrange for participation in international investigations. There is, moreover, no permanent Government support for economic ornithology, despite the practical value of its study, and therefore nothing corresponding to the Biological Survey in the United States, or to the official Institute of Ornithology in Hungary: nor have we any *Vogelwarte*, such as those which the Germans maintain at Rossitten and on Heligoland. Notable success has indeed attended several co-operative schemes in Great Britain, both for the marking of migrant birds and for observational work over a wide area, recent census studies of the heron and of the great crested grebe being cases in point: but on each such occasion the machinery has to be created laboriously afresh. As the promoters of the new scheme justly say, "the demands of contemporary research have in this field outstripped the training and organisation available for meeting them".

THE intention is to establish an institute at or near Oxford to serve as "a clearing house for information and contacts", and as "a national field centre which can collaborate with other centres overseas". The institute is to be supervised by a salaried director, assisted by an advisory committee, and a chain of observers will be organised throughout the country. For these purposes an appeal has been issued for £8,000 to cover the cost during the first five years, and it is to be hoped that this will meet with a good response: the honorary treasurer is Mr. B. W. Tucker, University Museum, Oxford. The nucleus of a permanent endowment, also, has been provided by the very generous action of Mr. H. F. Witherby, editor of the magazine *British Birds*, in presenting the sum of £1,400, realised by the sale of his important collection of Palæartic birds to the British Museum (Natural History). By the same act the national collection becomes enriched by the addition of valuable research material—some 9,000 skins representing about 1,300 forms—which has already been put to good use by Mr. Witherby in the study of plumages and moults and of geographical variation.

Natives of South Australia

THE seventh expedition, organised by the Board for Anthropological Research of the University of Adelaide, in conjunction with the South Australian Museum, has just returned from Ernabella, situated at the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges and not far distant from the reserve for aborigines in the north-west of South Australia. Much of the expense incurred was defrayed from a fund received from the Rockefeller Foundation and administered by the

Australian National Research Council. For two months previously, Dr. C. Hackett and Mr. N. B. Tindale had travelled on camels through the Musgrave Ranges and on to the Mann Ranges, studying the habits of the aborigines and following them in their daily pursuits. These two joined the main party in August, when an intensive survey of nearly a hundred natives, most of them as yet untouched by civilisation, was undertaken. Standard measurements, fifty-three in number, were made on each of 61 individuals by Drs. H. Gray and C. Hackett. Full-face and profile photographs of these same persons and a number of special photographs were secured, and about 2,000 feet of cinematograph films, portraying ceremonies and incidents in the daily life of the natives, were exposed.

THE Director of the South Australian Museum, Mr. H. M. Hale, had no difficulty in obtaining plaster face moulds of four men and two women, and full busts of four men—a remarkable fact when it is realised that this means that the subject must remain absolutely still for half an hour for the face and one and a half hours, or more, for the bust. Dr. K. Fry made observations on the reactions and behaviour of the natives. Mr. N. B. Tindale, ethnologist to the South Australian Museum, devoted his attention more particularly to social anthropology and language. Blood-grouping by Prof. J. B. Cleland and Dr. Hackett showed that out of 63 aborigines tested, 40 belonged to Group A and 23 to Group O. Prof. C. S. Hicks and Mr. J. O'Connor carried out physiological observations, especially as to the reactions to temperature; the natives naturally wear no clothing of any description, keeping themselves warm at night, when the temperature in winter often falls below freezing point, by means of small fires. Profs. T. Harvey Johnston and Cleland made notes on the plants and animals used in various ways. Dermatographs, finger-prints and phonograph records were also taken. Since the Australian native is essentially a nomad and soon tires of being in one place, organised team-work on expeditions such as these enables much data of very varied nature to be obtained quickly before the novelty wears off.

World Wool Production

THE news that the price of wool is rising concerns more people than the primary producers. When one considers the extent to which the funds available for research institutes, especially those overseas, are liable to suffer in 'hard times', any sign that times are improving for those countries where wool is an important item in the national economy is welcome. The November issue of *Wool Intelligence*, for which the Imperial Economic Committee is now responsible, shows that smaller wool supplies are being accompanied by rising prices. West Riding quotations are 40 per cent higher than a year ago; indeed, there has been a rise in prices of about 15 per cent on the average between wool sales held in mid-October and mid-November. Wool production in the current