

RARE BIRD RE-DISCOVERED

Next to the Noisy Scrub-bird and the Night Parrot the West Australian bird which has been most sought for by ornithologists is the Black Grass-Wren, (Amytornis lousei). Despite energetic searching it had never been seen again since its original discovery in the central Kimberleys in 1901 by the W.A. Government surveying expedition led by Mr. F.S. Brockman. It was a distinctive bird, mostly black in plumage, with narrow white streaks on the head and back. It lived among the piled-up masses of red and black sandstone, over and under which it ran with great agility.

News has just been received in Perth that the Harold Hall Expedition of the British Museum, now working in northern Australia, has re-located the bird and collected a number of specimens. Reporting on the re-discovery to Dr. D.L. Serventy, of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research at Perth, the leader of the expedition, Major Brian McDonald Booth, stated that the species was found north of Mt. House and was tolerably abundant among the sandstone blocks. He said that it required a foot-trek of 15 odd miles through extremely rough and broken country to reach the habitat of the bird. As complete observations as possible in the circumstances were made on its habits.

Dr. Serventy said that the original collection was made by Dr. F.M. House who was naturalist and medical officer on the Brockman Expedition. Earlier, in 1896, he had been appointed Resident Magistrate and medical officer of the Kimberley Division and afterwards settled at Gnowangerup, where he established a successful merino stud. The new bird was named in honour of him by Mr. A.W. Milligan, then honorary consulting ornithologist at the Western Australian Museum. The Harold Hall Expedition was now operating in the Northern Territory and would return to Perth in November.