

## NOTES FOR BOYS.

By DONALD MACDONALD.

### SOFTENING SKINS.

"Taxidermist" advises the use of neatsfoot oil, lard, or dripping, free from salt, in preference to olive or castor oil, recently recommended for softening skins. He has found that animal oils used on animal substances for softening give better results than vegetable or mineral oils. Very little is needed or the skin will feel greasy.

### AMATEUR SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

For young people with a scientific trend, a society that should possess attractions has just been formed. It is called the Amateur Scientific Society of Victoria. Mr. Rodda, the principal of the Working Men's College, has been appointed president, and Miss McKenzie honorary secretary. They expect to get a room and lighting free for the meetings, to which all amateur scientists and the public generally are invited. The subscription will be purely nominal, as the only expenses will be an occasional advertisement calling a meeting, and stamps for postage. Now that research is being seriously taken up in so many of our industries, this seems to me to be a movement which should have a very useful mission.

### BALL CARTRIDGE AND SHOT GUNS.

"Dusty" (Kinglake) also asks whether firing ball cartridges out of a 410 bore shot gun would affect the barrel. He says, "I take the shot out and put the bullet in the cartridge case. Would the gun fire accurately?"

There is no harm in using bullets in a smooth-bored gun occasionally, but if it happens to be a choke bore, which has a greater diameter at the breech than the muzzle, it is necessary to see that the bullet may pass through the muzzle. With frequent use, the barrel may get leaded, because the ordinary bullet is much softer than chilled shot. In the event of that occurring, the remedy is an easy one. Accurate shooting can only be expected when an ordinary round bullet (and no other shape should be used) is a fairly close fit for the barrel.

### BIRD-STUFFING.

I have further inquiries on this subject, one from H. Douglas, Toorak. Unless one intends to learn taxidermy as a business, and the demand for the work is not great, I think it is a mistake to touch it at all. In my experience of boys who have gone to the trouble of learning from a book how to stuff birds the work is always badly done, and the specimens useless. In the meantime a great deal of harm has been done. I would strongly urge inquirers to try some other hobby.

### WONTHAGGI BUSH BOYS.

Activity seems to be the keynote with the Wonthaggi Bush Boys. One of their recent excursions was to Melbourne, and afterwards a trip to

sions was to Melbourne, and afterwards a trip to Greensborough, and a trek through the hills.

#### NESTING ON PHILLIP ISLAND.

A resident complains that the boys of the New-haven Home do a lot of damage on the island in bird-nesting. As the present manager, he says, is a lover of nature, it would probably only be necessary to mention the fact in order to have the practice discouraged.

#### MELBOURNE WILD DUCK.

"In the Botanic Gardens on Monday," writes J. H. Hitchen, of Kew, "I noticed a wild duck with nine or ten little ducklings paddling with her. Is it not rather early for them to have a brood?"

The breeding-time for black duck, often influenced by the season, extends from August to December. Teal lay much earlier. The nests and eggs have been found in June, and young birds by the middle of August. Both black duck and teal have very often more than one brood in the season.

### GENERAL TOPICS.

#### A FLY DOPE.

"Dusty" (Kinglake) asks me to recommend some means of keeping flies and mosquitoes "from eating a chap alive at about Christmas time, when the gooseberry and raspberry-picking season is on. I have tried cork bobs," he says, "and fly nets, but they are of no use, as they get caught in the bushes."

The following American fly dope has been recommended:—Oil of pine tar, three parts; castor oil, two parts; oil of pennyroyal, one part. Put a dab on each cheek, and one behind each ear. The need of a good fly dope is often much felt in the country during summer especially where

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there are sand flies, and any hint which readers may have would be acceptable. Many years ago a friend, now dead, told me that the most perfect remedy for flies, and particularly effective with sand flies, was some old patent medicine, the name of which I have, unfortunately, forgotten. It was not made as a fly dope, but in some chance way its effect was discovered. Some reader may have heard of it.

#### CHEAP WHITEWASH.

W. Rendle, of Nathalia, seeing inquiries on this subject, says that a plan he tried, which proved effective as a woodwork whitewash, was to get some slaked lime, and sieve it, to take out the coarser lumps. Fill a kerosene tin part or one-third full. Then add enough skim milk to it to make a whitewash. Stir it well, and apply in the usual way. It will dry a splendid white, and will not rub off. He has used it, he says, for wood, iron, and brick. If a fresh quantity be required, never add milk to the used-up lime, but empty the tin, and prepare a fresh lot.

#### STRANGE LIGHTS.

Writing on September 4, from Archdale, Miss Alice Mather says that she and her brother noticed a strange light in the sky, which seemed to be about a yard and a half long, and 2ft. wide, about

a strange light in the sky, which seemed to be about a yard and a half long, and 2ft. wide, about two chains higher than the trees. "It moved quickly to and fro for a distance of about three chains from east to west. We were walking towards the south at the time, and it was in that direction. It lasted altogether about five minutes, and then disappeared. As both of us could see it clearly, there was no illusion. We wondered whether it was a searchlight."

Searchlights flashed upon dark clouds at night may be seen for a long distance.

#### KEEPING PIGEONS.

In reply to L. Weckworth, of Brighton North, the Defence department has placed no restriction on the keeping of pigeons as a consequence of the war. In the event of a war within the Commonwealth, there would, no doubt, be a restriction as to homer pigeons, to prevent the possibility of communication with an enemy.

#### DUNTRON.

There are many inquiries about Duntroon, some unfortunately not always accompanied by a postal address. All particulars as to entrance examinations, &c., may be obtained on application to the commandant of the college, Duntroon, Canberra, N.S.W.

#### MAKING A WHITEWASH.

Correspondents have kindly sent particulars as to a good whitewash, especially for outdoor work. "Roamer," of South Yarra, gives the following directions:—"Procure some lumps of unslacked lime, sufficient to half fill a medium-sized bucket, and one and a half or two pounds (for outside work even more) of any rough or dirty rendered fat. Add a little water at a time until the lime boils vigorously, which melts the fat, care being taken to keep the lime wet and stirred, as it will burn otherwise. Add sufficient blue to make a blue tint, and apply if possible whilst warm. Two thin coats are better than one thick, which is always liable to peel. The mixture is improved if strained through hessian. I do not put any salt in it as it causes iron rust, and in the case of hessian the nails would rust and show through." T. B. Jackson, of Sandringham, mentions the same plan. "T.O." (North Carlton) suggests half a bucket of lime and water of sufficient consistency to use. Then take half a pound of flour, mix with a little cold water and add boiling water to thicken it. Whilst hot pour into the bucket of lime, wash and stir well.

#### HATCHING SILKWORMS.

A little girl in Footscray has a large quantity of silkworm graine or eggs which are now beginning to show signs of development, and she wishes to know what she should do.

The hatching of silkworms' eggs should be regulated according to the supply of white mulberry leaves. Until the mulberry is in leaf it is usual to keep the graine in a cold place if possible, at a temperature of about 40 degrees. When the mulberry trees (white mulberry, not the edible kind) are fairly in leaf remove the eggs to a temperature of from 65 to 70, and they will at once hatch out. They are fed at first upon finely chopped mulberry leaves, and begin to eat at once. In the event of the eggs hatching out before the mulberry is in leaf, feed the grubs for a while on lettuce leaves. This will keep them on until

berry is in leaf, feed the grubs for a while on lettuce leaves. This will carry them on until the mulberry is available. If there is no means of ascertaining the temperature, put the eggs where the sun may shine upon them through a window.

## IN THE OPEN AIR.

### IMPERIAL WHITE BUTTERFLY.

The specimen sent by C. Hunter, from the New-haven Boys' Home, Phillip Island, is the Imperial white butterfly. The black pupa cases, held in a fine white web, belong to the same butterfly, and are usually found on sprays of mistletoe or loranthus, which is a parasite plant of gum trees. These are the only butterfly pupa which are found in a cluster.

### SKYLARKS AT GEELONG.

Dulcie Brownlee, of Geelong, says that skylarks are getting very plentiful in that locality. "A few years ago my father saw one at Lara. Later on he saw another at Winchelsea. Since then they have become very abundant between Barwon Heads and Geelong. This year, I am pleased to say, we have two of them singing beautifully in front of our house. We can hear them in the early morning. Are these the real English skylarks? They are much larger than the common ground lark, and have a peculiar flight. They only sing when they are soaring, and when they stop singing they dive straight down, head first."

There is an English and an Australian skylark, the Australian being generally called the brown song lark, but you seldom hear it until later in the year. English skylarks have been moving gradually down the coast from Fishermen's Bend, where they were first established, and are, probably, the birds mentioned.

### LOST HOMER.

Mrs. H. S. Reid, Mollison street, Kyneton, says that a Lutter came there some time ago, and although it leaves occasionally it always returns. The markings are:—Metal ring, V.H.A., 1915 1755.