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The Animals and Birds in Australia I should most like to see.

For people in some parts of the Empire it is doubtless difficult to imagine a country almost entirely bereft of native animals. Here in New Zealand, while having an abundance of native birds we have practically no native animals of any consequence. The only animals which were here when Captain Cook landed were the dog and rat introduced by the Maoris, and some lizards. Today certain originally domestic animals which were liberated early in our history, have become (~~wild~~) wild, but these hardly suffice to satisfy our natural curiosity.

Certainly we can visit a zoo but there, conditions smack too much of the artificial. Undoubtedly the best way to learn something of the life and habits of the animal world is to see them in their native surroundings. To my mind perhaps the most interesting of all because of its native animals and birds, is Australia. This fascinating land has so much in the animal line that is strange and wonderful that I think it is worth considerable attention.

From the curious point of view, one of the most remarkable of its creatures

is the platypus. This weird animal which for a long time puzzled scientists, is a mixture of many creatures. Like a duck it has a bill, small bead-like eyes and webbed feet. It is, however bigger than a duck, and has rich brown fur and a tail. It is an amphibious creature, swimming like a duck with its webbed feet. On land it burrows into the soil in long burrows with its strong claws, like a rabbit. To add to this it lays eggs and suckles its young!

Could one hope to see a more curious animal? Is there any other creature that can compare with its mixtures? I believe not.

Having seen entrancing films, pictures, and read thrilling books dealing with the subject, I feel that it would be one of my happiest moments if I could but confirm for myself the marvels with which it is accredited. I think you will agree that this peculiar creature would awaken anyone's curiosity.

Another native of Australia, certainly less marvellous, but most interesting all the same is the kangaroo. Whenever I think of Australia I always associate it with a kangaroo, and indeed this animal is adopted as

Australia's unofficial emblem. Why, if there is nothing unusual about it, is it so popularly Australian? The answer is that there is something interesting about it. Peculiar to Australia, this creature is much more numerous and, consequently, more noticed than some of the more remarkable creatures. It is famous for its gait, which consists of a tremendous hop, the power being supplied mainly by the back legs and the tail. It is one of the few animals which rest in a comparatively upright position, a much more attractive pose than if crawling on all fours. Another famous thing is its pouch, in which its young live after they are born. To read, and see pictures of the kangaroo is very interesting, but I should love to see it actually making its famous jumps, and carrying the young in its pouch. Surely to see the thing itself in actual life is much more fun than merely staring at meaningless pictures or dull, long-worded prose? What is the good of knowing that it has five toes on its hind leg, if I have never even seen one in its home? I ask you?

Another animal ^{often} associated with Australia too, is the koala

or native bear. This lovely little furry chap, so child-like in its expressions and utterances, is not allowed out of Australia, so one must actually go there to see it. He is confined to Australia because he is a delicate little fellow and also because his food consists exclusively of the leaves of certain gum trees. Unfortunately he is rapidly becoming extinct, although great efforts are being made to preserve him. I am sure anybody would be delighted with this furry little bundle of life that we hear so much about. Surely he must be one of the most lovable ^{little} animals in the world and I should very much like to observe him in all the simplicity of his treetop home. Of course there are many ^{other} animals I should like to see too, but while in Australia I should want to compare some of their brightly-coloured birds with our own.

In New Zealand our birds are more noted for their songs than for any special vividness of colouring, although both our kingfisher and native pigeon do have glassy-coloured plumage. In Australia however, they are more brilliantly colo-

plumaged and more tropical.

Australia's kookaburra or laughing jackass is a bird I should like to see, not because of its appearance but because the famous note which has earned for it the name, Laughing jackass. This bird is world-famous for its harsh noisy laughter. When one hears so much about a bird, it follows that it should be worth seeing and hearing. What will it matter when I have actually seen the bird, how many feathers make up (to) its tail, or any other small unimportant technical details?

Because of their brilliant plumage two other birds I should like to see would be the parrot and the cockatoo. These, though not confined to Australia are famed for their bright colours, and the cockatoo for his crest. Their notes are not important, although they are both many and noisy.

When I go to Australia, I should like to make a complete visit and see all the other wonders of this great land, its smaller animals, opossums, wombats, bandicoots, wallabies, and all the many more whose home is Australia. Then the rest of the birds would not be forgotten. Of course Australia has many

more fascinating animals and birds I should want to see too, and I feel that I could spend a very enjoyable time discovering them. I am sure every boy feels some love for wild life, even if he is not a born naturalist, and I am very curious to know whether all these facts which are shown so much in books and films of today, are correct. One must know something of the things that go on in the world around, and how better can this be accomplished than by actually travelling? I am quite sure that if ever given a chance to confirm these things, I should be most happy to see the little platypus, the hopping kangaroo and the furry koala. I wonder if it will ever be my good fortune to do so?