numbers as to literally clog the gills and prevent respiration, or the water may have been so deficient in oxygen as to be unfit to support the higher forms of life, or they may have been so overfed as to produce indigestiou and sickness. No doubt any one of these causes acting for weeks in succession, or a combination of the whole, would be sufficient to render the entire littoral fauna unhealthy; and every death of the larger animals would tend to make the conditions worse for those that remained. I examined the stomachs of both oysters and mussels, and found them full of Peridinia, and in many cases the water enclosed in the shell contained great quantities in a living condition.

From what I have observed of the habits of the particular species of the Peridinia in question they appear to be extremely social, and seek each other, and swim in lines or clouds, always with a tendancy towards the light; and, as it is probable they do not extend to a great depth, the bottom fauna will not be so much affected as the littoral. The sudden appearance of this organism, which has discoloured the whole of the waters of Port Jackson and destroyed a very considerable portion of its fauna, is another instance of our ignorance of the various conditions which affect our marine food supplies, and shows the importance and necessity of the immediate establishment of a thoroughly efficient biological station. If such an Institution had been in existence during the presence of this extraordinary visitation, the whole of the question as to its effects on our marine fauna could have been satisfactorily determined experimentally.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOMAS WHITELEGGE.

P.S.—(7th May) The Peridinium mentioned in the above report is probably a new species, and will be dealt with in a further report. The organism in question made its appearance in vast numbers about the middle of March, and is now disappearing.—T.W.

NOTE ON THE NIDIFICATION OF *PLOTUS NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ*, *Gould*.

The New Holland Snake-bird or Darter.

BY A. J. NORTH, F.L.S.

THE Trustees of the Australian Museum have lately received the eggs of *Plotus novæ-hollandiæ*, taken by Mr. J. L. Ayres at Lake

Buloke, in the Wimmera District of Victoria, on 1st April, 1891. The nest was built at a height of about fifteen feet, on the branch of a Eucalyptus standing in the water, it was outwardly composed of sticks lined inside with twigs, and contained five eggs, one of which was unfortunately broken in descending the tree. The eggs are elongated ovals in form tapering gradually towards the smaller end, where they are somewhat sharply pointed; the shell has a thick, white, calcareous covering, only a few scratches here and there revealing the true colour underneath, which is of a pale blue. Length (A) 2·41 x 1·45 inches, (B) 2·32 x 1·42 in., (C) 2·34 x 1·45 in., (D) 2·43 x 1·47 in. Although very late in the season, Mr. Ayres found another Darter's nest on the same day, containing five newly hatched young ones.

This species is found all over Australia, but is more sparingly distributed in the extreme southern and western portions of the Continent.