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**Peck, Julia ORCID: 0000-0001-5134-2471 (2013) Family and Field Work:  
J.S.P. Ramsay's Photograph Album. In: The Photograph and the  
Collection: Create | Preserve | Analyze | Present. Museums Etc.,  
Edinburgh, pp. 60-95. ISBN 978-1-907697-85-2**

Official URL: <http://museumsetc.com/>

EPrint URI: <http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/3279>

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Published in *The Photograph and the Collection: Create | Preserve | Analyze | Present*. Museums Etc., and available from:

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## Family and Field Work: J.S.P. Ramsay's Photograph Album

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J.S.P. Ramsay (1884-1981), a successful businessman who owned and ran a photographic processing company called Ramsay Photoworks, was also an amateur ornithological photographer. Based in Sydney, Australia, Ramsay took a keen interest in the conservation of the environment and in educating others about birds and bird life (Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d., 1). Over a period of eighty years Ramsay contributed articles and photographs to a number of publications and institutions, as well as reviewing equipment for the ornithological press (Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d.; Ramsay 1915; Ramsay 1918; Ramsay 1919; Ramsay 1933). Ramsay left numerous letters, documents, photographs, photographic transparencies and negatives that his family have donated to various institutions in Australia (Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d.; Ramsay 1900-1979). Ramsay's contribution to Australian ornithological photography has been recognised in Peter Slater's book *Masterpieces of Australian Bird Photography* (1980); accounts of Ramsay's photography have emphasised his technical innovation and for producing photographs that not only recorded nests, eggs and birds, but the birds' relationship with their environment (Slater 1980, 55; Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d., 2). This chapter, in contrast, aims to analyse Ramsay's early photography within the amateur networks of photography and ornithology, Ramsay's family life and the broader culture of nature study in early twentieth-century Australia. It proposes that the study and photography of natural history was intrinsically social and familial, even though the formal output of Ramsay's production (his ornithological articles, for example) implied that Ramsay worked in isolation.

The focus of this chapter will be an album that contains photographs by Ramsay produced approximately between 1905 and the early 1930s (Ramsay c. 1890-1925). The album contains over 1600 photographs spread over 238 pages and appears to be chaotically organised (the photographs are not in chronological order or consistently grouped according to theme or subject). The album is large and shows considerable evidence of use: a range of markings and captions seem to have been added to the album possibly over a number of years. The album is now disbound but preserved in its original order by the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney. The album is an accessibly engaging object and the apparently unclear structure and numerous marks and brief captions make for compelling speculation. The photographs depict birds, eggs, nests, some landscape photographs, photographs depicting field work, photographs of insects, camping trips, equipment used during field trips and photographic expeditions, photographs of Aboriginal rock engravings, photographs of mammals and people studying mammals (there are some photographs of Harry Burrell holding a platypus, for example)<sup>1</sup> and photographs of family and friends. Initially the family photographs seem to be an odd inclusion in the album, but the family photographs and their relationship to the ornithological images will be shown to be significant. The album is also indexed, with a list of numbers and bird names at the back of the album, which largely exclude references to Ramsay's family. To date, accounts of Ramsay's photography make no reference to his family photographs or to Ethel, Ramsay's wife, who helped him with some of his photographs and also accompanied him on some of his field trips (Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d.; Slater 1980, 55-58).

Ramsay used his photographs in numerous ways during his lifetime. He contributed photographs to other ornithologists' publications (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1921) and also illustrated his own ornithological articles (Ramsay 1915; Ramsay 1918; Ramsay 1919). He contributed photographs to Amy Mack's book, *Bush Days* (1911) and contributed lantern slides, and then later, colour 35 mm slides, to the National Photography Index for Australian Birds (Brazier 2011). Although the full distribution of Ramsay's photographs is currently unknown it seems likely that his photographs were widely recognized within ornithological circles. Indeed, the sharing of photographs between ornithologists had been established early in Australia's visual publishing on ornithological matters (Campbell 1901; Hall 1906). These photographs were used for illustration purposes and tell us little about Ramsay's interest in photography and ornithology, although their widespread use, together with Ramsay's letters and other artefacts, do indicate that Ramsay was well connected in ornithological groups. In interviews, for example, Ramsay was keen to stress his technical innovations in photography and how he managed to gain some startling photographs of birds (Slater 1980, 39-42). Objectively, Ramsay's innovations were typical of early amateur ornithological photographers more broadly (Brower 2011, 38-39; Hall 1906; Campbell 1901; Le Souef 1907; White 1991). Although the actual use and distribution of Ramsay's photographs are important to acknowledge, as are Ramsay's own claims about his contribution to ornithological photography, the album from Ramsay's early life potentially offers an insight into Ramsay's use and love of photography beyond technical considerations. With reference to the theoretical framework of orality, and some careful contextualisation of his practice, I hope to show that Ramsay's photography was part of the social fabric of his existence and that it has a social significance that extends beyond his technical and practical achievements. Indeed, such a perspective helps to enrich our understanding of ornithological photography as not just a masculine activity, but as a social and complex activity with affective aspects.

Although Catherine Snowden, John Ramsay (J.S.P. Ramsay's son) and Alison Lea compiled a short biography of Ramsay's life when the photographs were donated to the Macleay Museum, and the archival fragments are fairly extensive, there is no autobiography from Ramsay himself. The kinds of amateur networks that he worked in, and the kinds of pleasures and practices that he engaged in, are therefore reconstructed from the remains, including the photographs. The album under scrutiny here provides rich insight into Ramsay's early adult life, albeit one that is partial and complicated. The photographs provide factual evidence of events, places and people, but not in an uncomplicated way.<sup>ii</sup> What needs to be explored in greater detail, then, is the apparently random structure of the album, especially as it is not known when the album was compiled or whether it served a specific purpose. Given the repetition of some of the images, and the random distribution of photographs from some known events (such as Ramsay's expedition to the Grose Valley in 1913, which appears sporadically through the album), it seems likely that the album was put together at a time later than the images' production. It also suggests that Ramsay did not sort or thin the selection of images but retained lots of photographs of the same events, trips and encounters. Many of the images are of a similar size and few images seem to be given particular prominence through their position on the page or their separation from other photographs. Indeed, each page is packed with photographs, often leaving little room for extensive notes or captions (Figure 1). The album could be dismissed as a visual container of images, but given the index and the annotations, the album seems to demonstrate a thorough engagement with Ramsay's photographic pursuits. Ramsay, however, has

not left notes discussing the album or its importance, but nonetheless it is possible to re-imagine his encounter with the album as an object. With this in mind, and given its repetitions and broad inclusion of subject matter, I wish to suggest that the album is a mnemonic device that enables the reiteration of important events from the early part of his adult life. Martha Langford's study of photograph albums and their relationship with oral history enables that relationship to be established.

Langford's book *Suspended Conversations* (2001) argues for a connection between oral history and the album as an object (122-157); indeed, in Langford's eyes the photographic album has "been one way of preserving the structures of oral tradition for new uses in the present" (21). Acknowledging that the album does not tell a story in itself Langford claims that "something like the compiler's performance must take place if the album is to be unlocked" (21). Although the albums that Langford examines are no longer 'spoken', Langford uses Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy* to build a model upon which orality in relation to the album can be demonstrated (Ong in Langford 2001, 124). Developing Ong's categories in relation to the album Langford looks for "patterns of inclusion, patterns of organisation and patterns of presentation" (127). Langford extends Ong's theory to propose that the formulaic, repetitive and realist elements of the album enable the unambiguous utterance of "character and circumstance" (127). Such characters are "cast in the familiar light of habits, hobbies and mundane affairs" (129). Whilst Ramsay's photographic pursuits in the bush, his commitment to the preservation of habitats and his attachment to his family were unlikely to be seen by Ramsay as simply mundane, the representation of these activities in the album normalises all of these things by making them familiar and intimate.

Langford notes that "the past needs to be repeated lest it be lost" (127), making repetition as a mnemonic device significant. Every inclusion therefore is not necessarily an indicator of visual tautology, but instead can be interpreted as "Redundancy or copiousness, serv[ing] the speaker in several ways, amplifying important ideas, restating points that may have been missed, and gaining him time in which to marshal his thoughts" (139). Importantly the photographs in the structure of the album do not have to create a complete or immediately apparent narrative but only exhibit narrative potential in order to prompt the oral performance of the compiler's narrative (140). Although it is impossible to recreate the author's spoken version of the album, the album becomes a device, a "spatial framework ... that licenses a spectator's capaciousness. One can always return to objects that are fixed on the wall or page. Looking back to front, browsing, and skipping are encouraged by the fragmentary, yet continuous, nature of the album" (150). Langford proposes close attention to the album and its contents as a means of recreating its orality. The repetitive inclusion of photographs in Ramsay's album suggests a longing to remember events and protect them from forgetting. The photographic repetitions of both personal and ornithological circumstances, and their recording, were clearly important to Ramsay and their inclusion in the album made a record of his photographic triumphs and the practice of ornithology part of his social circumstances apparent and ready for enunciation.

As described above, Ramsay's album initially appears chaotic, with events recurring intermittently through the pages. Yet there does appear to be some order within the album too. Some pages are thematically organised; for example, on page fifty four frogs, butterflies, lizards and insects are grouped together (these other wildlife forms were less systematically studied by Ramsay). Often birds on nests appear together on the same page and some sections of the album emphasise birds

within their habitat. Some groupings also emphasise places and visitors, such as page seventy four (Figure 1). There are excursions recorded here to the National Park, Stanwell Park, Grose Valley and Scone; some of the photographs are dated between 1912 and 1914. In the middle of the page, however, is a photograph of a bird on a nest, labelled with its Latin name, *Rhip.rufifrons*, and the location: Bulli Pass. Although the image is not dated, a near-identical photograph was published in Slater's book on Australian bird photography, dated 1907 (Slater 1980, 54). Such incursions and random inclusions are usual in the album and the typological framework, then, is suggested rather than strictly adhered to.

### **Insert Figure 1 (reproduce whole page)**

Figure 1: Ramsay, J.S.P. c. 1890-1925, untitled photograph album, Macleay Museum, HP84.52.8074, University of Sydney.

Ornithological practices at the end of the nineteenth century, and in the earlier part of the twentieth century, were marked by a strong sense of masculinity and masculine camaraderie (Griffiths 1989, 353-357; Ryan in Brower 2011, 43-44) and indeed Ramsay reflected on how Albert Edward Keene, a friend from his childhood, continued to be a staunch friend and associate in the process of producing photographs of birds in his adult years (Slater 1980, 57). It is therefore no surprise to see photographs recording base camps and other male members of expeditions, including Albert, in the album (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 35, 81, 128 and 222). What is perhaps more surprising is the inclusion of Ethel, Ramsay's wife, systematically throughout the album as she is infrequently mentioned in Ramsay's recollections about his early ornithological activities. Other women, who seem to be members of larger social gatherings, also appear throughout the album. It has been acknowledged that women accompanied ornithological expeditions in the first decade of the twentieth century and wrote their own books and journalistic columns (Mack 1911; Griffiths 1989, 351-357; Robin 2001, 30) but little has been said about women's contribution to Australian ornithology, photography or nature writing at this time. Yet Ethel clearly accompanied Ramsay on many expeditions, including to Grose Valley in 1913 (for their honeymoon), to Norfolk Island in 1915 and to the Upper Clarence River in 1918 (Southcombe 2012). Ethel even featured in some of the photographs that Ramsay published (Ramsay, 1918).

In some of the photographs Ethel seems to perform the role of making tea in camp, picking flowers and sewing (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925: 171; 74; 46) but she also occasionally appears as a photographer (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 125) and is positioned within photographs in order to indicate the scale of nests (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 72; 65). There are other photographs of Ethel with children and friends and taking part in activities such as rowing and riding a horse (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 165; 41). Although Ethel is not mentioned in Ramsay's later recollections of his photography and expeditions (no mention of her is made in Slater's book, for example) it is clear that Ethel was an important member of the ornithological expeditions during the earlier part of their marriage. Yet in his published account of the Clarence River expedition, Ramsay has focused on producing an authoritative account of the expedition and represents himself as a man who observed new and interesting behavioural aspects on the White-Headed Tree Runner and the Rifle Bird (Ramsay 1918,

5-8).<sup>iii</sup> Although it is clear that Ramsay was not alone on the expedition (he refers to the travellers as 'we') Ramsay does not name his companions or assistants, which included Ethel and an Aboriginal man who climbed trees for him (9). The details of Ethel's contribution to camp life and her photographic activities are acknowledged in Ramsay's field notes, which are more anecdotal as well as observational:

Yesterday when I was away from the camp heard the gun fired twice, and a made a bolt for home wondering what on earth the "missus" had wanted me for. I found she had used the revolver on a Goanna and got him too – up a tree. He was too close to the camp, and we suspected him of being about at night as we heard a lot of crashing through the ferns that we could not account for, also the Sunlight soap went twice and nothing but a goanna could stand that (Ramsay 1900-1979, September 28, 1918).

Ethel also took photographs for Ramsay. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October Ramsay records that he returned to a nest where the camera had been set up for two days, as he "wanted Ethel to take the Robin's nest near the camp" (Ramsay 1900-1979, October 3, 1918).

In addition there are photographs of Ethel with their first child, Margaret, usually referred to as 'Mardy' in the album. On two occasions Mardy is out with her parents, once on the beach and once somewhere in the bush or nearby park (the location is unknown) (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 82; 177). Included in the album are photographs of Mardy at home with Ethel on the porch, and a photograph of Ramsay with a child (possibly Mardy) outside a suburban home (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 223; 222). Travelling or working in the bush with a small child must have been challenging, but Ramsay enjoyed opportunities for pedagogy, and it seems at the very least that Australia's country was enjoyed as a leisure activity by the family together, and this included making photographs together outside. In similarity to the other photographs of picnicking and outdoor social leisure activities, Mardy seems to have been integrated into Ramsay's and Ethel's bush and leisure life. This is perhaps not surprising as the study of nature was considered to be appropriate for women and girls in the Victorian and Edwardian eras (Griffiths 1989, 353).

What remains less obvious, perhaps, is the oversight of mentioning women and girls' participation in historical accounts of the study of nature, although such oversights seem common. For example, David Elliston Allen notes that women did participate in Field Clubs but focuses on their social impact (high teas and shorter excursions) and the impediment of their feminine attire (Allen 1976, 167-168). Tom Griffiths, on the other hand, notes women's participation in nature writing in Australia, especially Jean Galbraith and Mary Fullerton but does not systematically analyse it (1989, 351). What Griffiths does account for, though, is the impact of the discourse of the 'coming man' in Australian society in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, which emphasised the study of nature and participating in the great outdoors as a means of overcoming the perceived impact of urbanisation on young men (1989, 355) and the fact that nature study was often framed as a suitable pastime for boys and men (353-357). However, women and girls did contribute articles, questions and observations in various journalistic and literary contexts, but their contribution does not seem to have altered the framing of naturalism as masculine. Nonetheless, examining articles, books, journals and newspapers it is clear that women were taking part in the study of nature, writing and taking photographs in the early part of the twentieth century, but the nature of their contributions has not been systematically analysed.<sup>iv</sup>

Ramsay's early active period of writing, exploring and photography seems to have occurred between 1915 and 1920 and the dates of the many of the photographs in the album coincide with this period of time; this also coincides with the rise in popularity of men and boys roaming in the bush and studying nature (Griffiths 1989, 344-359) that seems to have emerged at least partly in response to concerns about the degeneration of men in an urban context, but also connects to longer traditions of the study of nature as a legitimate and productive pastime for the middle classes (Allen 1976, 73-93). Initially, I assumed that the arrival of Ramsay's children hampered Ramsay's ornithological activities, but this does not seem to be the case as Margaret, Ramsay and Ethel's oldest child, was born in 1916, prior to the Clarence River expedition that took place in 1918. Furthermore, Ramsay cites the success of his business during the booming 1920s, followed by the great depression of the 1930s, then World War Two as factors that affected his ornithological photography (Slater 1980, 56). Ramsay also reported that he enjoyed taking his family into the country, especially Kuringai Chase (Slater 1980, 56) therefore it appears that his children did not straightforwardly hamper his photographic activities or time spent in the bush. What is clear, however, is that Ramsay did not feel it necessary to acknowledge Ethel's presence on his expeditions in a public context, as seems typical for this period of time in Australia. Nonetheless, Ethel and Mardy were important enough to be photographed and included in the album.

There are photographs of other social and camping activities in the album, including photographs of friends, picnics and family (Ramsay, c. 1890-1925, 9; 12; 25; 29; 33; 35; 41; 46; 57; 72; 62; 63; 117; 161; 171; 219; 222). The album clearly indicates that the bush is not only the site of ornithological interest, but also of social interest too. Although photographing birds requires patience and willingness to be quiet, camps and picnics could still be sites of social exchange, and they did not necessarily need to be exclusively masculine preserves, even if the public accounts of his travels elided the gender and ethnicity of his companions. Ramsay, in similarity to some of his fellow ornithologists and photographers from this period of time, did not feel it necessary to exclude women from their outdoor pursuits, although an understanding of their roles and contributions to camps and the study of natural history is very incomplete.

Looking more closely at page seventy four (Figure 1), for example, we have photographs of two picnics (one in a camp at Grose Valley), a social gathering or outing that required a horse and carriage, a photograph of two people looking out over a view (middle left of the page) and photographs of visits to notable locations ("Rats Castle" in the bottom left corner). On this page are two views of landscapes that do not seem to include people, but which position the viewer as appreciating the scenery. In the middle of the page, as noted before, is the photograph of *Rhip. rufifrons* on the nest. Overall the page seems to suggest that the landscape, for Ramsay, is a site for social and leisure activities, producing 'views' to marvel at and enjoy and subjects to study in detail (the bird, flowers and rock formations). Page seventy two (Figure 2), is similar in this regard, although there are photographs that show Ramsay fishing (top right) and the transportation of equipment in the bush (lower right) and of course Ethel standing next to a nest in the bottom left. The views, camps and appreciation of scenery remain the same. Where there is greater emphasis on birds, such as on page one hundred and one (Figure 3), Ramsay and Ethel are still included on the page (bottom left), apparently taking tea after escaping a bush fire: the caption reads: "On the Way to Lionsville After fire at "Slaughter Yard Creek", Camp Lionsville, 1918" (see also: Ramsay 1900-1979, 1918). The ornithological content of this page is more prominent, with three photographs of birds in trees, an empty nest and two occupied nests.



**Insert Figure 2 (reproduce whole page)**

Figure 2: Ramsay, J.S.P. c. 1890-1925, untitled photograph album, Macleay Museum, HP84.52.8072, University of Sydney.

**Insert Figure 3 (reproduce whole page)**

Figure 3: Ramsay, J.S.P. c. 1890-1925, untitled photograph album, Macleay Museum, HP84.52.8101, University of Sydney.

**Insert Figure 4 (reproduce whole page)**

Figure 4: Ramsay, J.S.P. c. 1890-1925, untitled photograph album, Macleay Museum, HP84.52.8081, University of Sydney.

The social networks of ornithology are inscribed in the album too. Looking at page eighty-one (Figure 4) there are some familiar themes: a photograph of Albert, Ethel, Ramsay and one other woman (her name unreadable) in the top right, together with a photograph of a woman wading in the sea (middle top). Photographs from the Grose River trip and from the Nepean also appear (top left and bottom middle respectively). Yet there are two photographs from Belltrees, Scone, which are significant (upper middle page). The left image shows kangaroos in a paddock and the photograph to the right shows a general view of a park-like landscape typical of the Upper Hunter Region. The photographs can be read as significant within the networks of ornithology as these photographs are associated with H.L. White, owner of Belltrees, a keen patron of ornithology and a collector of eggs and skins (Robin 2001, 38-45). White purchased photographs of Bower Birds from Ramsay (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1915) and the Norfolk Island trip in 1915 was suggested by J.H. Bettington, a close friend of H.L. White's (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1915). Whilst neither man appears in the album, their influence on Ramsay's travelling life is suggested by the photographs and by the expeditions that Ramsay undertook. Indeed, although there is no other formal record of Ramsay's visit to Belltrees, the photographs suggest that Ramsay was invited to White's home and that he had sufficient time there to engage in photographic pursuits.

As noted above, Ramsay's successful business kept him from further pursuing his ornithological interests during the 1920s and it is possible that Ramsay had had a desire to pursue ornithology as a career as a youngster (Southcombe 2012). J.S.P. Ramsay's father, E.P. Ramsay, had been the first Australian-born curator at the Australian Museum (Sydney) and it is clear that his father had influenced Ramsay's interest in natural history in his childhood (Snowden, Ramsay and Lea n.d., 1). However, E.P. Ramsay retired due to ill health and for both medical and financial reasons J.S.P. had not been able to further his education (Southcombe 2012). Although his circumstances prevented Ramsay from pursuing a professional career in ornithology, Ramsay had been able to pursue this interest as an amateur photographer and indeed Ramsay himself had noted that it was his interest in birds that had led to an interest in photography, not the other way around (Ramsay 1955).<sup>v</sup> Ramsay's photography business, and its attendant economic success, therefore enabled him to pursue his interest in ornithology. Yet his ornithological and photographic activities in the bush were not

isolated: they were operating at least in part within the amateur and professional networks of ornithology.

What becomes interesting to note at this point, then, is how active and developed Ramsay's amateur photographic interest was and how this enabled him to establish a sense of credibility and respect within the ornithological community. This is of interest within photographic contexts because the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century is usually associated with the decline of 'gentleman amateur' (the knowledgeable, independent and scholarly researcher, pursuing both scientific and artistic pursuits) and the rise of photographic snaphooter that makes endless photographs of similar subjects (Seiberling 1986, 3; Batchen 2008). Indeed, it has been noted that there is an absence of appropriate ways of discussing 'serious' or 'aspirational' amateur photographers in recent critical accounts of photography (Batchen 2008; Pollen and Baillie n.d.), but it seems Ramsay's photography enabled him to develop a scholarly and formal interest in ornithology in the 1920s that later became focused on photographic activities. Membership of the Royal Australasian Ornithological Union would have enabled Ramsay to meet other amateur and professional ornithologists but more informal networking opportunities were also in play. Ramsay advertised his photographic business in the pages of *The Emu*, but it seems he was selling copies of his bird photographs before his professional business interests were advertised to this specific market.<sup>vi</sup> It is likely that his social outings in the bush, together with his photographic activities, offered opportunities for him to meet and network with more prominent people in the world of ornithology. Such networks, of course, were common in the study of natural history. In this context, however, what is interesting is that Ramsay was able to use both photography and the study of birds to fulfil in part his aspiration of being a natural historian, at least until his business became too successful. His father's prestige within Australia may have helped in establishing some of these networks, but of course Ramsay's economic circumstances meant he had to be resourceful in order to pursue his vocation. The social activities in the bush, and their commemoration through the act of photography and their preservation in the album, suggest that they were intrinsic to being able to explore and distribute the results of photographic pursuits. Indeed, the names of some of these other ornithologists and patrons, are either included or implied in the album: including H.L. White, J.H. Bettington and S.W. Jackson (a close associate and friend of Ramsay's). An amateur interest in ornithology became an interest in photography, a business in photography and then a more developed interest in ornithological photography. Ramsay was able to exercise his interest in ornithology and photography that had effects in terms of credibility and social prestige and social activities paid dividends in terms of social mobility.

Perhaps one of the interesting questions that could be raised at this point is the degree to which Ramsay's social account of his activities was important to his life, especially as he did not refer to Ethel or his companions greatly when reminiscing about his past, with the exception of Albert who was a childhood friend. Indeed, in arguing that the album is a mnemonic device, and that its repetitions encourage the narrator to divulge details of the activities contained within, it is surprising that Ethel, Mardy and other friends and family are absent from Ramsay's published recollections. I believe there are several reasons for this absence.

Although the album and Ramsay's papers are now in separate institutions, the separation of photographs and correspondence did not happen within Ramsay's life. Ramsay kept a remarkable record of his correspondence with ornithologists, most of which was undertaken with other men.

Ramsay also continued to make photographs of birds throughout much of his adult life but did not pursue ornithology or ornithological photography as a means of earning a living. When invited to become president of the Royal Australian Ornithological Union, for example, Ramsay declined on the grounds that he felt that his contribution to ornithology had been insignificant: “Personally I have done practically nothing ornithologically though nature photography has given me a great deal of enjoyment” (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1943). Ramsay was clearly respected for both his photography and for his campaigning work in relation to environmental matters and to illegal egg collecting (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1932; 1934). Indeed, in relation to this last matter, Ramsay had participated in an ornithological camp-out organised by the Union where egg collecting had taken place. If Ramsay felt that his ornithological contributions were “practically nothing” (whether that was the case or not) Ramsay was also probably participating in camp-outs because they were social affairs as well as opportunities for ornithological activity. Ramsay’s later recollections of his ornithological and photographic activities, then, mirrored the convention of not mentioning companions and social matters when reporting on ornithological matters, especially when adopting a more formal mode of presentation such as articles for *The Emu*. Indeed, Ramsay’s reporting style and his formal essays may have been an echo of his father’s professional interest in ornithology. Ramsay’s public persona, then, followed the conventions of reporting activities in the bush as a largely singular pursuit that did not reflect on the social aspects of ornithology. This does not mean to say, however, that memories of friends, family and the social life of ornithology and the bush were forgotten or evaded in private and indeed, the album is a mainly private space.

The album, therefore, can be imagined as a private and intimate mnemonic device, as a means of structuring Ramsay’s recollections of his accounts of his early years in photography, including Ethel, Mardy and Ramsay’s friends. Indeed, the recollections of Ethel may have been too painful to share publicly as Ethel passed away in May 1957, nearly thirty years before Ramsay’s death and over twenty years prior to Slater’s correspondence with Ramsay (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1957; 1979). Ramsay received and kept many letters of condolence following Ethel’s death and although there are no records of his mourning, the retaining of these letters suggests that Ethel’s loss was deeply felt (Ramsay 1900-1979, 1957). Additionally, Ramsay may well have seen having a family as a normal activity that did not warrant special mention, unlike his photographs and technological innovations. The album, however, enables a fuller understanding of both the social and networking activities that were intrinsic to the pursuit of photographing birds and reveals the extent to which his family and friends were included in, if not a part of, his field work.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express a warm thank you to the people who enabled research on J.S.P. Ramsay including Jan Brazier at the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, who introduced me to the Ramsay materials, and to the staff at the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. Paula Southcombe and Julia Ramsay Gardoll, who generously shared memories of their grandfather and answered questions about the Ramsay family, were very supportive of this research – thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Harry Burrell (b. 1873, d. 1945) ran a grazing property and kept a small zoological garden. Burrell wrote a book about the Platypus in 1925 and is the first man to have studied the Platypus in captivity and he made original contributions to the natural history of the animal (Moyal 2001: 167-176). His relationship with J.S.P. Ramsay has yet to be researched.

<sup>ii</sup> Peter Burke provides a good introduction into the benefits and pitfalls of using photographs as documentary evidence in the writing of historical accounts.

<sup>iii</sup> Ethel appears in two of the illustrations that accompany the article, but no mention of her is made in the text. Ramsay probably included Ethel in the photographs in order to indicate the scale of the nests.

<sup>iv</sup> Women contributed photographs and commentaries to *The Emu* see, for example, 'Shrike-Thrush Tamed' by Miss J.A. Fletcher in 'Camera Craft Notes,' of *The Emu* (1915).

<sup>v</sup> J.S.P. Ramsay to Mr. Dickison dated: July 16 1955. Ramsay, J.S.P. 1900-1979, J.S.P. Ramsay MSS. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 5849.

<sup>vi</sup> Ramsay was advertising services to "Nature Photographers who desire enlargements of other reproductions which, while in every way artistic, yet retain all the points of Scientific interest found in the negative, should get in touch with J.S.P. Ramsay, 317 George Street, Sydney..." on the rear cover of *The Emu* from 1921 onwards. Yet Amy Mack's book, *Busy Days*, which includes photographs by Ramsay, was published in 1911.