

LETTERS TO ECOS



Volcanoes and nouns!

I was very interested to read the article on fossil birds in *Ecos* 33. However, any reader in the Mount Gambier district would take exception to your stating that the most recent volcanic eruption in Australia occurred about 8000 years ago, when we take pride in residing with equanimity around a crater which last came to the boil (literally — the underlying aquifer produced steam-ejected ash rather than a massive lava flow) about 1410 ± 90 years B.P. (before present).

M.J. Sheard in Vol. 102 (5) (August 1978 issue) of *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, pp. 125–39, gives that date, and one somewhat earlier, 4710

± 70 years B.P., as the two most recent eruptions of the Mount Gambier Volcanic Complex. The actual radiocarbon dating was reported by Ferguson and Rafter (1957) in *New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology*, 38(b), pp. 732–3, and supported by Blackburn (1966) in the *Australian Journal of Science*, 29, pp. 50–52.

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I refer to *Ecos* No. 33, Spring 1982. On page 15, in the second and third columns, there appears reference to a place called 'Malagasy'.

I have to say there is no such place! I presume (with tongue firmly in cheek) that you refer to Madagascar, home of the Aepyornis. 'Malagasy' is the adjectival form of the name and, of course, appears most frequently, when it does, as the 'Malagasy Republic'.

Ecos isn't the only one to fall into the trap. The World Book Encyclopaedia got it wrong too!

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