

A Note on *Oreoscopus gutturalis*, De Vis.

BY GREGORY M. MATHEWS, F.L.S., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

DURING his recent visit to England Mr. Dudley Le Souëf was entrusted by Mr. C. J. Wild, acting director, on behalf of the trustees of the Queensland Museum, with the type-specimens of several species described by Mr. C. W. De Vis, for comparison with the series in the British Museum.

Amongst these type-specimens was that of *Sericornis gutturalis* of De Vis (Proc. Roy. Soc., Queensland, vi., p. 244, 1889), a pretty little species discovered by Mr. Broadbent, near Herberton, in Northern Queensland. The bird turned out not to be a true *Sericornis*, and Mr. A. J. North described it under the new generic title of *Oreoscopus* (*Agricultural Gazette* of New South Wales, March, 1905, p. 247), describing at the same time the nest and eggs, forwarded to him by Mr. Elgner (*cf. Emu*, v., p. 47, 1905).

I have compared this type-specimen and another from Bartle Frere, collected by Mr. E. Olive, in the Hon. Walter Rothschild's collection with other Timeline genera in the British Museum, and I find that the nearest ally to *Oreoscopus* seems to be the Indo-Malayan genus *Turdinulus*. Compared with *Turdinulus roberti* it is found to differ in its longer tail and distinctly scutellated, or rather plated, tarsus. In both genera the rictal bristles are very small and indistinct and confined to the gape.

Considering the species to be of more than ordinary interest, I have had much pleasure in having the accompanying plate (III.) prepared.

Description of a New Emu-Wren.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, C.M.B.O.U.

THROUGH Mr. Donald Macdonald's "Nature Notes," which are published weekly in *The Argus*, a new Victorian bird has been brought to light. Mr. C. H. M'Lennan, an observing bush naturalist, drew attention to an Emu-Wren frequenting the Mallee district. On being requisitioned for further particulars of the little bird, Mr. M'Lennan obligingly and promptly forwarded a skin for examination. At once it will be seen that the Mallee bird differs from the ordinary Emu-Wren of the more southern parts of Victoria and Tasmania by its general lighter colouring, by its smaller dimensions, except the bill, which is larger, and by the six loose feathers of the tail being less filamented. It appears to be an intermediate form between the common Emu-Wren and the Rufous Emu-Wren of North-West Australia. I have ventured to designate the new species *Stipiturus mallee*, or the Mallee Emu-Wren. Mr. M'Lennan, its discoverer, states that it is partial to the tufts of spinifex grass in the Mallee tracts, and is extremely difficult to detect.



J. G. Keulemans del et lith.

Witherby & Co Imp

OREOSCOPUS GUTTURALIS.

Description (Male).—Forehead chestnut ; tail fuscous ; rest of upper surface olive-brown, each feather having a broad dark (fuscous) stripe. Lores, throat, and chest light purplish-blue ; rest of under surface greyish-brown.

Dimensions in inches :—Total length, 5 ; wing, 1.54 ; tail, 3.04 ; bill, 0.39 ; tarsus, 0.6.

(NOTE.—This note has been held over for some time in the hope that Mr. M'Lennan could procure another specimen, perhaps a female, but, on account of the shy nature of the little birds, he has, so far, been unsuccessful.—A.J.C.)

The White-eye (*Zosterops coerulescens*): its Relation to the Orchardist.

BY A. H. CHISHOLM, MARYBOROUGH (VICT.)

THERE has been so much said to the discredit of this familiar little bird that I am tempted to take up the cudgels in its defence, and state my personal and practical experience of its destructive and useful traits.

Z. coerulescens is the only representative of the genus in this district, and is a fairly plentiful bird. About the end of December, just after the usual breeding season, two or three couples and their attendant young will gather together into a small flock, and set out upon a systematic tour through the orchards and vineyards. As about this time soft, sweet fruits, such as grapes, mulberries, &c., are ripening, it is not to be wondered at that the White-eyes, possessing as they do a decided taste for saccharine matter, are not slow to take toll of the luscious fruit hanging so temptingly in the sunshine. Then the angry grower, who sees only the empty skins hanging on the grape bunches, does not stop to consider the other side of the question, but sets innumerable poisons, and shoots the birds on sight, whereas, if he would only take the trouble to observe the bird, its habits, and its food a little more closely, he would soon be convinced of the undesirability of such a proceeding. Time and again have I debated this point with prejudiced orchardists.

It is principally during the autumn and winter months (when most birds are on their best behaviour) that the extreme usefulness of White-eye to the orchardist and horticulturist becomes most apparent. To enumerate some of its good qualities :—First of all, it is the great enemy of that most destructive pest the fruit tree aphid. I have frequently watched groups of White-eyes busily clearing aphid of various colours off all kinds of fruit trees. Each bird takes a certain branch area, and works systematically, industriously, and well. I am always sorry to see them leave, for I consider them better and certainly cheaper



Campbell, Archibald James. 1908. "Description of a New Emu-Wren." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 8(1), 34–35.

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