

The female is not a close sitter, and only once did I flush her from her eggs. However, it is almost impossible to walk quietly through the water, or where the reeds are growing thickly. I was never able to detect a female in the act of building, and the males do not appear to call in the immediate vicinity of the nest. When the young are in the nest, or hidden in the neighbouring reeds, both parents become very anxious, fluttering from clump to clump with harsh cries, or even shamming lameness, or a broken wing, where the peat is above water-level. In the nest the young are able to flatten themselves down in a remarkable way. One brood I was examining was so quiet and motionless that I was quite deceived, thinking they were all dead.

Megalurus striatus is a very jealous bird, and the greatest care is necessary to avoid disturbing an unfinished nest. One I found was just ready for eggs. I only gently felt to the bottom with one finger; but this was quite enough to cause its desertion. A new nest was built in a neighbouring clump, the lining of feathers being removed from the nest I had disturbed and utilized in the new one. All this was accomplished, and four eggs laid, within seven days.

About the end of January the birds appear to leave the swamp, returning towards the end of June. The males may be heard calling the following month.

To my thinking, *Megalurus* has some affinity with the Reed-Warblers (*Acrocephalus*). In the nature of its haunts and the situation and construction of its nest it has much in common with the latter. Also, there is a certain peculiarity about the flesh of both genera. It is remarkably soft, and has a peculiar smell. *Megalurus* is a delicate, loose-plumaged bird, and should be skinned quickly when preparing scientific specimens.

Young birds closely resemble their parents, and are very secretive, remaining hidden in the densest clumps of reeds.

Annotations.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, COL. MEM. B.O.U., MELBOURNE.

New Sericornis.—At the Sydney session (1911) of the R.A.O.U., Mr. J. W. Mellor, Adelaide, exhibited a *Sericornis* which he procured in the Mount Lofty Ranges. It somewhat resembles the *Sericornis* frequenting the Victorian ranges, but differs by the dark sub-terminal markings of the tail, which markings are absent in the Victorian species. The South Australian bird is clearly Gould's *S. osculans*.

Comparing this mainland bird of South Australia with those collected by the R.A.O.U. expedition to Kangaroo Island (1905), it will be observed that the insular bird is generally darker (a feature peculiar to other kinds of birds inhabiting that island), except the abdomen and edgings of the primaries, which are lighter, while some of the tail feathers are slightly tipped with white.

At the time we regarded the Kangaroo Island bird as referable to *S. maculata*—the Western form; but I now venture to separate it under the name of *Sericornis halmaturina* (Kangaroo Island Scrub-Wren).

Description of Adult Male.—Upper surface, wings, and tail brownish or fuscous, the upper tail coverts being olive-brown; primaries edged with grey or dull white; tail near the tip banded with dark brown or black, and all but the two central feathers tipped (on the inner web) with white; spurious wings black, some of the feathers edged with white; line above the eye and a spot below white; space between the eye and bill black. Under surface whitish, throat, chest, and breast having dark centres to feathers; flanks and tibia tinged with brownish-grey. Dimensions in inches:—Length, 5; wing, $1\frac{3}{16}$; tail, 2; bill, $\frac{7}{16}$; tarsus, $\frac{7}{8}$.

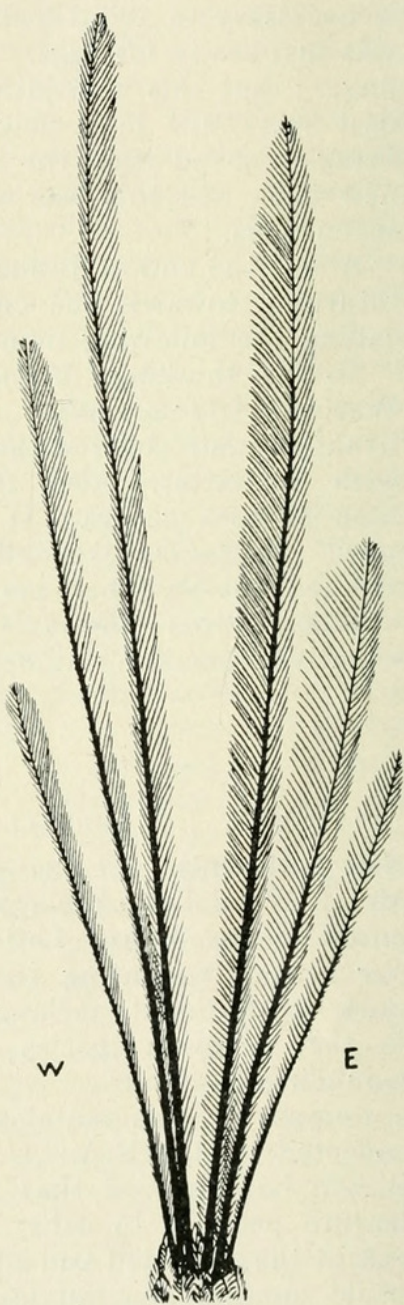
A Correction.—In *The Emu*, vol. x., p. 168, I described a supposed new *Eopsaltria* from North-West Australia as *E. hilli*.

Notwithstanding its yellowish breast and upper tail coverts, Mr. Gregory M. Mathews (see *Bulletin B.O.C.*, vol. xxvii., page 41) has pronounced it to be a female of *Pachycephala melanura* (Gould). A re-examination of the specimen confirms Mr. Mathews' opinion, and I take this opportunity of correcting my mistake, with apologies to Mr. G. F. Hill.

The female of *Pachycephala melanura* has not yet been figured. Gould figured the male only.

Emu-Wrens.—Concerning my remarks in the last issue of *The Emu* (p. 222), herewith is given an illustration of half the tails (natural size) of the males of the two forms, Eastern and Western, kindly drawn by Mr. C. C. Brittlebank. The Western (left-hand portion) is from a fine skin collected at Ellensbrook, and obligingly loaned by Mr. B. Woodward, F.G.S., Perth Museum. The other portion is from a bird collected at Springvale, Victoria, by Mr. A. G. Campbell.

In addition to the difference in character of the tail, as figured, *Stipiturus westernensis* has a lighter-coloured (greyish instead of brownish) mantle, darker



blue on the throat, and some white streaks on the feathers of the ear-coverts, which are light rufous on *S. malachurus*.

Dimensions in inches of a male *S. westernensis*:—Total length, $7\frac{1}{4}$ (including tail, $5\frac{1}{8}$); wing, $1\frac{13}{20}$; tarsus, $\frac{15}{20}$; culmen, $\frac{7}{20}$.

While on the subject of Emu-Wrens, I may mention that a party of field ornithologists, led by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, procured in the Mallee district of Victoria, during the spring of 1910, the first female of *Stipiturus mallee* (Campbell, *Emu*, vol. viii., p. 34), but it was so damaged as to be almost unrecognizable. However, some of the party returned to the locality the following (last) spring and secured several examples of both sexes.

The female, in general upper surface, resembles the male—olive-brown broadly striped with a darker colour, with forehead and crown chestnut. Under surface cinnamon-brown, lighter on breast and abdomen, while some feathers about the ear-coverts have a bluish stripe, differing from the rufous stripe in the female of the common Emu-Wren (*S. malachurus*) and the white of *S. westernensis*.

New Pseudogerygone.—Through the courtesy of Mr. H. L. White, Belltrees, New South Wales, I have examined a small series of a Fly-eater collected by Mr. S. W. Jackson in the north-west corner of that State. I believe it to be hitherto undescribed, and venture to name it

Pseudogerygone jacksoni (Reddish-crowned Fly-eater), sp. n.

Adult Male.—Upper surface olive-brown, darker on the head, approaching cinnamon-brown; wings fuscous, primaries edged with grey; two central tail feathers olive-brown, rest of tail almost black (fuscous), broadly crossed with white, each feather also more or less marked with white at the extremity, chiefly on the inner web, but in instances across both inner and outer webs; line from bill to over eye whitish; dark spot behind the ear. Under surface, including tail coverts, white; buffy wash on flanks. Eyes red; bill and legs almost black, the former lighter at the basal half of under mandible.

Dimensions (approximately) in inches:—Length, 4.1; wing, 2.2; tail, 1.5; tarsus, .7; culmen, .3. Dimensions in millimetres:—Length, 110; wing (outstretched), 80; tail, 44; tarsus, 17; bill (at gape), 44 (Jackson).

Adult female similar to male, but not so white on the under surface; greyish on throat and chest. Dimensions:—Length, 113 mm.; wing (outstretched), 82; tail, 46; tarsus, 17; bill (at gape), 12 (Jackson).

Juvenile.—Upper surface rufous; primaries edged with ochraceous buff; eyes pale blue; legs brown. Dimensions:—Length, 86 mm.; wing (outstretched), 62; tail, 32; tarsus, 16; bill (at gape), 10 (Jackson).

Habitat.—Mogil Mogil district, New South Wales.

These birds are distinctly darker on the upper surface than typical *P. culicivora*, taken in Victoria and Riverina, from which

they may be further distinguished by the reddish-tinged (cinnamon-brown) forehead and crown. This colour might have been taken for youthful plumage had not the birds above described been parents. Again, the eyes are "ruby red" (Jackson), as against "reddish-yellow" (Gould) of *P. culicivora*.

The new bird is named in honour of Mr. Sid. W. Jackson (collector for Mr. H. L. White), who discovered it while camped and enduring great discomfort from excessive heat in the back-blocks of north-western New South Wales.

The following is taken from Mr. Jackson's field notes:—

"My camp was within a few miles of the Queensland border fence, and I had only been a couple of days camped on this extensive belt of rich, flat country when my attention was attracted to the sweet and characteristic song of a *Pseudogerygone*, the song being different to that rendered by any other species of the genus with which I am acquainted. Later, and during my journeys between the camp and Collarenebri (40 miles), I do not remember having heard or noticed this bird in that area; and all the specimens seen and collected have been on Cambo Cambo station only, but in all probability their habitat extends beyond that, and ranges westward over a big portion of this dry and inland north-west part of New South Wales. One of the first birds observed of this species was on the 25th September (1911), and it warbled at the same place as I had heard it for two days previously, and its neat pensile nest was discovered getting built, both birds being busily engaged going to and fro with material. It was placed about 9 feet up from the ground, and well hidden in a mass of the round-leaved foliage of a clump of bible box (*Eucalyptus*, sp.) suckers which grew up from the base of a ringbarked tree. This nest contained a clutch of three eggs on 9th October (1911), when I also secured both the parent birds. The birds were not plentiful, but very local; and I usually heard one during my daily tramp, and now and again at early morning one would visit the wilga tree at the head of my tent, and there pour forth its sweet but feeble little song. From what I saw of the birds, they appeared to be partial to the suckers of the coolibar and bible box trees, but the wilga trees were also great favourites with them. The birds preferred the open forest, where the trees were well scattered, and the height of their breeding season (October) was the period when they most frequently twittered their sweet notes. By December these songs grew remarkably less, and in January (1912) the birds became silent, or were rarely heard, consequently, owing to their small size and dull colour, they were difficult to locate. Most of their time is spent feeding on small insects, &c., on the leaves and bark of bushy trees. The bird has a habit of moving its tail and the ends of its wings up and down rapidly on alighting on a branch, then folding its wings on its back."

Mr. H. L. White describes the nest and eggs on page 249.



Campbell, Archibald James. 1912. "Annotations." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 11(4), 245–248.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/mu911245>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/35756>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu911245>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/244757>

Holding Institution

American Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.