



ARTAMUS SUPERCILIOSUS: Gould.

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ARTAMUS SUPERCILIOSUS, *Gould.*

White Eye-browed Wood Swallow.

Ocypterus superciliosus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. 1836, p. 142; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I. fig. 2.

THERE is no species of *Artamus* yet discovered to which the present yields the palm, either for elegance of form or for the beauty and variety of its plumage; the only known species with which it could be confounded is the *Artamus rufocenter*, an Indian bird with the breast similarly marked, but which is entirely destitute of the superciliary stripe of white, which has suggested the specific name; in this character and in the rich chestnut colouring of the breast, it differs from every member of its tribe inhabiting Australia. I am unable to say what is the extent of its range, but I am induced to believe that it is confined to Australia, and that in all probability it seldom leaves the interior of the country; the extreme limits of the colony of New South Wales, particularly those which border the extensive plains, being the only parts where it has yet been observed. I first met with it at Yarrundi on the Dartbrook, a tributary of the Hunter, where it was thinly dispersed among the trees growing on the stony ridges bordering the flats.

From this locality to as far as I penetrated northwards on the Namoi, as well as in the direction of the River Peel, it was distributed in similar numbers, intermingled with the *Artamus sordidus*, at about the ratio of one hundred pairs to the square mile, the two species appearing to live and perform the task of incubation in perfect harmony, both being frequently observed on the same tree. In their dispositions, however, and in many of their actions they are somewhat dissimilar; the bird forming the subject of the present Plate being much more shy and difficult of approach than the *Artamus sordidus*, which is at all times very tame; it also gives a preference to the topmost branches of the highest trees, from which it sallies forth for the capture of insects, and to which it again returns, in the usual manner of the tribe. In every part where I have observed it, it is strictly migratory, arriving in summer, and departing northwards after the breeding-season.

The nest is ever most difficult of detection, being generally placed either in a fork of the branches or in a niche near the bole of the tree, whence the bark had been partially stripped. It is a round, very shallow and frail structure, composed of small twigs and lined with fibrous roots; those I discovered contained two eggs, but I had not sufficient opportunities for ascertaining if this number was constant. Their ground-colour is dull buffy white, spotted with umber-brown, forming a zone near the larger end; in some these spots are sparingly sprinkled over the whole surface; they have also the obscure grey spotting like those of *A. sordidus*; the eggs are rather more than eleven lines long by eight and a half lines broad.

The male has the lores, space surrounding the eye, and the ear-coverts deep black; chin greyish black passing into blackish grey on the chest; crown of the head greyish black; over each eye a pure white stripe commencing in a point, and gradually becoming wider or spatulate in form as it proceeds towards the occiput; all the upper surface, wings and tail fuliginous grey, which is lightest on the rump and tail; all the tail-feathers tipped with white, except the outer web of the lateral feather, which is grey; under surface of the wing pure white; all the under surface rich deep chestnut; irides nearly black; bill light blue at the base, black at the tip; feet dark lead-colour.

The female has a similar distribution of colouring, but differs from her mate in the following particulars: lores and a ring surrounding the eye jet-black; only an indication of the superciliary stripe; throat grey; tail not so distinctly tipped with white; under surface light chestnut-red.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.



Gould, John. 1848. "Artamus superciliosus, Gould., White-eyebrowed Wood Swallow, [Pl. 32]." *The birds of Australia* 2, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.312959>.

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