

NOTE ON *MYIAGRA PLUMBEA*, VIG. & HORSF.

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On the 18th ult. I procured a fine example of this fly-catcher a few miles from Falmouth; it was affecting some partly cleared land on the side of a hill near the Four-mile Creek, I had noticed it the day previous in a young *Eucalyptus gigantea*, and resorted to the spot on the following morning with a view of looking for it, when I was fortunate enough to find it in the same tree. On dissection it proved to be an immature male attired in the dress of a female, one of the peculiar characteristics of the species.

As no previous record of the occurrence in Tasmania of this fly-catcher is in the possession of the Society, it may be fairly concluded that it has not been met with before in the island. In his monograph of the birds of Australia, Gould speaks of it as a summer visitant from the north of New Holland to the colony of New South Wales, arriving there in September, and remarks that he did not meet with it in Van Diemen's Land or in any other of the Australian colonies. It could, however, scarcely find its way into New South Wales, without passing through some portion of Queensland, and in all probability occurs sparingly in that colony; furthermore as it occurs on the North-East coast of Tasmania, it doubtless will be found to pass through the islands of the Furneaux Group on its way south, and will some day be added to the list of birds frequenting that region.*

The Plumbeous Flycatcher is a very marked *Myiagra*, its broad bill and characteristic tail being highly typical of the genus, the former organ being even broader than in most Indian species that I am acquainted with. It may be well to give measurements and description of this example on the occasion of its taking a place in our avi-fauna.

Its dimensions are: Length, 7 inches; wing, 3·4; tarsus, 0·6; mid toe, 0·4, its claw, 0·17; bill to gape, 0·78; width at base, 0·3; iris, brown; bill, with the upper mandible blackish, and the lower bluish, with dusky tip; tarsi and feet, faded bluish. Head, back of neck and lower back, bluish cinereous with a plumbeous green gloss across the nape; interscapular region and centre of back, scapulars and wing coverts cinereous brown; quills and tail hair brown, the tertials edged light, and the central pair of rectrices with brownish white shafts;

* Since writing the above, I learn that this bird is common in Victoria, although Gould does not mention its occurrence in Port Phillip, the name applied then to that colony.

the lateral rectrices with the outer webs pale; at the base of upper mandible the feathers are tipped light; throat, foreneck, chest, and under wing coverts rufous, the colour extending somewhat to the sides of the breast, and the centre of the chest deeper than the rest; beneath, from the breast, white, with a faint wash of fulvous on the under tail coverts; flanks, bluish grey.*

This would appear, according to Gould, to be the dress of the female, except that in his plate of that sex the rufous of the chest spreads lower down the flanks than in my example, and in this the quills and rectrices are not edged with blue as he describes them to be in the note accompanying his figure. The plumage of my specimen is, however, considerably abraded, so that it is probable the latter features may have existed at an earlier stage.

I had but little opportunity of observing the habits of this interesting little visitor, except that the peculiar tremulous motion of the tail on alighting after each little flight in search of its food was very apparent; in fact, it was this characteristic that first drew my attention to the bird. Its stationary habit as exemplified by what I have stated above is also noteworthy.

The *Myiagra plumbea* is the sixth addition to the avi-fauna of Tasmania within the past six or seven years, the others being *Scythrops novæ Hollandiæ*, *Lamprotreron superbus*, *Synöicus sordidus*, *Bernicla jubata*, and a Raptor which, Mr. Allport says, approaches more nearly to *Haliastur sphenurus* than to any other Eagle figured in Gould's birds of Australia. The latter bird together with the two first named—the remarkable “Channel bill” and the beautiful “Superb Fruit Pigeon”—are evidences of what we may expect in the way of stragglers, or occasional visitors to this country, and the fact of their being procured and located in our Museum holds out a hope of many additions yet to be made to our list, when there shall arise (as probably will be the case) the same spirit of research into the ornithology of Tasmania as has existed with regard to that branch of natural history in Great Britain for more than fifty years past.

* I append for future reference Gould's description of the male. “Whole of the upper surface, wings, tail, and breast, lead colour, glossed with green on the head, neck, and breast, and becoming gradually paler towards the extremity of the body, and on the wings and tail; primaries, slaty black; secondaries, faintly margined with white; under surface of the wing, abdomen and under tail coverts, white; bill, leaden blue, except at the extreme tip which is black; irides and feet, black.”



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