

On the Oology of Australia,

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BEFORE Mr. Gould entered upon his magnificent work, there seems to have been very little done in Australian Ornithology.

In fact, the subject, although one of the greatest interest, was, as a whole, almost entirely neglected. In Dr. Shaw's "*Zoology of New Holland*," only a few plates are devoted to the subject, which were taken from specimens in collections made by Sir Joseph Banks, during Captain Cook's first voyage.

Some figures again have been given in the "early voyages of Phillip, White, Collins, and King; and Lewin's "*Birds of New Holland*" contain only about 25 or 30 plates."

Vigers and Horsfield commenced a work upon the Birds of Australia in the collection of the Linnean Society, the largest collection then existing, but unfortunately they did not proceed beyond the true Honey-eaters. (*Meliphagidæ*.)

Descriptions of Australian species have also appeared in the works of various authors, such as Cuvier, Latham, Shaw, and Vieillot, but many of these are meagre, and in some instances incorrect.

Thus, no general or reliable history of this portion of our Fauna had been undertaken before May 1838, when Mr. Gould left England for Australia, there, personally, to investigate the manners and habits of our birds in their native state. And we see with what great success his efforts have been crowned; exceeding even his own most sanguine expectations, for at the close of his magnificent work, we find that through his instrumentality, no less than upwards of 360 *new* species have been discovered and figured, (thereby raising the number to 650 species.)

Among which, he states, "are comprised many forms remarkable for their novelty, the anomalous character of their structure, and the singularity of their habits, such as the Bower-birds (*Ptilonorhynchi* and *Ohlamyderæ*,) and the mound raising birds, (*Leipoa*, *Talegalla*, and *Megapodius*,)" errors concerning which have been all rectified in his work.

No part of Australia is better suited for bird-life than New South Wales, and from the brushes, scrubs, and belts of luxuriant vegetation found all along the coast, between the mountains and the sea, one would naturally expect to find New South Wales tenanted by a fauna peculiar to itself. This is really the case: New South Wales is inhabited by a greater number of species than any other part of Australia, although the species *strictly peculiar* to it are less in number than those *peculiar* to Northern Australia. Upon examining Gould's table of the distribution of species, we find that 385 are known to inhabit New South Wales; 289 South Australia; 243 Western Australia; 230 Northern Australia; and 181 are found in Van Dieman's Land. Of these 88 are peculiar to New South Wales; 76 to South Australia; 36 to Western Australia; 105 to Northern Australia; and 32 are peculiar to Van Dieman's Land; 33 being found in all parts of Australia.

By the term *peculiar* Mr. Gould does not imply that such species are strictly confined to their respective countries, but, that *as far as is yet known*, they have not been found elsewhere. As the character of the soil differs and varies considerably, so each dissimilar district is clothed with a different style of vegetation, and each has, as it were, a Zoology of its own. For instance, the lofty *Eucalypti* are tenanted by the honey-loving Parakeets (*Trichoglossi*) and some *Ptiloti*. The *Banksiæ* swarm at various seasons of the year with the true honey-eaters, (*Meliphagidæ*.) The Fig trees are resorted to by the Regent and Satin-birds, and the *Ptilinopi*. The Palms by the large fruit-eating Pigeons (*Carpophagæ*), and the beautiful *Lopholaimus*. In the dense scrubs we find the Brush Turkey and *Leipoa*, and on the grassy slopes and plains, the Ground Parrots and terrestrial Doves, while the densely wooded spurs of the mountains and gullies, are traversed by Lyre-birds and the *Orthonyxæ*.

Most of the Old World birds are beautifully represented with us: The Merlin and Kestrel of Europe, by our *Falco frontatus* and *Tinnunculus cenchroides*. The European Osprey, by *Pandion leucocephalus*; the sparrow-hawk, (*Accipiter nisus*) by our bird of the same genus, *Accipiter torquatus*, which is found throughout the whole of Australia. We also have our Plovers, and Dottrells, one Avocet, and one stilted Plover. Among the Water-birds, the Grebes and Cormorants of Europe are also well represented by *Phalacrocorax carboides*, *Podiceps gularis*, and *P. Australis*.

In addition to having most of the European genera represented with us, few countries can boast of so many distinct genera peculiar to itself as Australia, such, for instance, as *Ægotheles*, *Pardalotus*, *Strepera*, *Gymnorhina*, *Grallina*, *Pteropodocys*, *Pachycephala*, *Colluricincla*, *Falcunculus*, *Oreöica*, *Menura*, *Psophodes*, *Origma*, *Malurus*, *Pyrrholæmus*, *Struthidea*, *Ptilonorhynchus*, *Chlamydera*, *Licmetis*, *Calyptorhynchus*, *Platycercus*, *Euphema*, *Nymphicus*, *Scythrops*, *Myzantha*, *Anthochaera*, *Entomyza*, *Sittella*, *Climacteris*, *Leipoa*, *Pedionomus*, *Talegalla*, *Tribonyx*, *Cereopsis*, *Anseranas*, and *Biziura*, &c., &c.

Some species are universally dispersed over the whole country, from North and Western Australia to Van Dieman's Land, as *Corvus Coronoides*, *Ichthyaetus leucogaster*, *Milvus affinis*, *Chelidon arborea*, *Phaps chalcoptera*. The Emu, (*Dromaius Novæ Hollandiæ*) and the Bronze cuckoo, (*Chalcits lucidus*), a migratory species, which also pays an annual visit to New Zealand. Others again are, as far as is yet known, confined to particular parts.

In New South Wales we have *Aquila?* *Morphnoides*, *Podargus humeralis*, *Erythrodryas rosea*, *Eöpsaltria australis*, *Menura superba*, *Psophodes crepitans*, *Malurus Lamberti*, *Epthianura tricolor*, *Origma rubricata*, *Polytelis barrabandi*, &c. In South Australia, *Malurus melanotus*, *Ptilotis cratitia*, *Xerophila leucopsis*, and both Western Australia and North Australia have also birds peculiar to those parts.

In taking a general view of the Australian Fauna, we find a very marked deficiency in the Raptores or birds of prey. The whole of these, including the hawks and owls both noc-

turnal and diurnal, comprise only 37 species, among which we find only one of the restricted genus *Aquila* or True eagles; no vulture of any kind, and only two kites, *Milvus affinis* and *M. issurus*. Among the nocturnal owls, however, those belonging to the genus *Strix*, are more numerous than in any other country, comprising no less than four species, whereas other countries are provided with only one species of this useful genus.

Among the perchers, the insectivora are greatly in excess; of the *Podargi* there are 6 species, the Honey-eaters (*Meliphagidæ*) include more than 20 genera and 63 species, while of the *Maluridæ*, which are among the most beautiful and brilliantly colored of our Australian birds, there are 13 species.

The *Fringillidæ* (finches) are found in great numbers; and the *Psittacidæ* extremely numerous, more so than in any other country. They form four great groups, the *Calyptorhynchi*, *Cacatuæ*, *Trichoglossi*, and ground Parrots.

The *Calyptorhynchi* procure the greater part of their food from the *Banksiæ* and *Casuarinæ*, the small branches of which may frequently be found torn open by these birds in search of Lepidopterous and other Larvæ; nor are even the woody nuts of the *Banksiæ* proof against their immensely powerful jaws, but are split open and the white kernel eagerly devoured. Of *Calyptrorhynchus* there are at least 7 species known, and all, I believe, inhabit Australia.

The *Cacatuæ* number six species. The *Trichoglossi* subsist chiefly upon the honey procured from the flower-cups of the *Eucalypti*, and the Ground parrots, which include the genera, *Euphema*, *Platycercus*, *Psephotus*, *Melopsittacus*, *Nymphicus*, and *Pezoporus*, are all peculiar to Australia. The united groups of these comprise 60 species.

While the *Gallinacea* are few, being only represented by two genera of which jointly there are only 5 species; the Pigeons and *Hemipodes* are very numerous, and many of the former, such as the *Carpophagæ* and the *Ptilinopi* are very beautiful. The *Procellaridæ* which are found visiting the whole of our coast, are also in species more numerous than in any other part of the world.

The matter forming the preceding paragraphs has been for the most part extracted from Gould's "Birds of Australia." I have, however, thought it desirable to introduce them here in order to afford a general view of the character of Australian Ornithology.

Now, while so much has been said about the birds themselves, I find that their habits and economy *as connected with their nidification*, are but imperfectly understood, and that the nests and eggs even of many of our most common species, remain still undescribed.

It is this part of our Ornithology then, viz.: The "*Oology* of our Australian Birds," to which I intend paying particular attention, for indeed there is little or no hope of finding new species within a considerable distance of Sydney. I have frequently heard it regretted that collections of Australian birds' eggs are not more numerous; and that those which are occasionally made, seldom contain more than fifty or sixty species. Most of our birds have the credit of only laying two eggs at a sitting; though even if such were the case, they make up for this shortcoming by having two or three broods in the year. I find, however, that three eggs, are upon the average, laid by our birds. The Honey-eaters lay two or three; the *Acanthizæ*, *Maluri*, and *Chthonicola* three or four; Larks three. The Quails are great layers; the Parrots also, often lay from eight to ten eggs; most of the King-fishers lay four or five; and the Finches six or eight.

Many of the nests of our birds are most beautiful, and as well worth collecting as the eggs. Nothing can surpass the neatness, warmth, and at the same time, the strength of the nests of some of our *Acanthizæ*. And it is not less interesting to observe the peculiar structure and material used in the formation of those of the White-winged chough, (*Corcorax leucopterus*) and of the *Grallina*, which are composed of mud with grass to strengthen them, a compost which will harden in time to an almost incredible degree, when exposed to the rays of the sun. Upon one occasion, I threw one of the large basin-shaped nests of the Chough to the ground from a height of more than thirty feet without its breaking.

Besides the Chough and *Grallina*, we have another bird which builds its nest of mud, upon a horizontal bough; this is the *Struthidea cinerea*, a bird not found in this district, its habitat being the South Eastern portion of the interior. Mr. Gould quoting from Mr. Gilbert's journal, states that the nests of the *Struthidea* are similar to those of the *Grallina*, and placed in like situations upon a horizontal bough; those found by Mr. Gilbert had a thick lining of grass, more than is usually found in the nests of the *Grallina*, and one of them contained four eggs, "the medium length of which was one inch and a quarter by seven-eighths of an inch in breadth; their colour was white, with blotches, principally at the larger end, of reddish brown, purplish gray, and greenish gray, some of the blotches appearing as if they had been laid on with a soft brush."

I might mention many other nests equally curious and beautiful, but will proceed to those more immediately connected with our plate. It may be imagined that the figures are too highly coloured, but those who have taken eggs themselves, will know how greatly the specimens fade. The bloom of the more brightly tinted goes off in a few days, while some even lose their original colour altogether, and turn as in the case of the Pied robin, (*Petroica? bicolor*) from green to a dull brown; I might cite numerous other instances, for nearly all the eggs fade considerably, even when kept from the light in close boxes. I have tried various means to remedy this, but without success. Gum, if laid on thickly, causes some to keep their colour, but imparts an unnatural gloss, which does not improve their appearance at all. The best way, upon the whole, is to empty them carefully, and if possible, without using water; when an egg is once wet, it immediately loses its bloom: *sucking* has this in its favour, that the contents may be withdrawn through almost an invisible hole. Many people use a complete set of instruments for egg-blowing, but these, although useful and handy, may very well be dispensed with.

The paintings from which the figures on Plate I. were lithographed and colored, have been executed by Mrs. Edward Forde, and were, with the exception of the three first, (Nos. 1, 2, and 3) painted from specimens at most only three or four days from the

nests, so that by these means I have secured correct and unfaded colors. As far as I am aware, none of these have been figured before in any publication; and even if they have, we know that the descriptions and coloring must have been taken from faded specimens, unless the author has taken the same precaution and had them painted within a few days after they were laid.

Some of our species breed very early, commencing in July, and often continue until December. The early breeding birds, such as some of the *Acanthizæ* and *Eöpsaltriæ*, and many of the Fly-catchers, have their second brood in October, and very often a third in December. So that if the eggs of our Australian birds are few in number, they certainly make up for it in the number of broods which they have; I have been informed by some of my old school-fellows, that they have taken no less than eight nests from one pair of birds during the season, as soon as one nest was taken, the birds constructing another, and so on, until the birds had built eight separate nests, and laid fifteen eggs. And I have myself, in the case of what we considered rare birds, taken four or five nests from the same pair. A curious fact relating to some species, is, that they are found breeding before their plumage reaches the colour of the adult birds. Whether these are the young in their first year, or whether these species take two or three years before arriving at the plumage of the adult, I have not yet determined; from the plumage alone, one would judge them to be the young in their first year. I am not alluding to such birds as the males of the *Satin* and *Regent* birds, &c., which we well know take two or three years before appearing in the livery of the adult, but to certain species of the genera *Acanthiza* and *Melithreptus*, the generality of which obtain their livery at the end of the first year, but which I have found breeding while yet in the first year's plumage.

Much perplexity has arisen on account of naturalists finding young birds breeding while in first year's plumage, supposing, naturally enough, that they were adult birds, and consequently considering them as new species.

POMATORHINUS TEMPORALIS,

The Temporal Pomatorhinus.—(Gould, B. Austr., Vol. IV., pl. 20.)

Pl. I., Fig. 1.

The genus *Pomatorhinus* is well represented in Australia, but the great 'strong hold of this tribe is the south-eastern portion of Asia, and the Islands throughout, to the North of Australia. From what I can learn from the notes of various authors, upon the Asiatic members of this genus, I find that our Australian species seem to form a separate and distinct group, differing in their habits and nidification, and chiefly in the curious markings of their eggs, in which all our species closely resemble each other. From these facts alone they quite merit their separation into another genus.

Four species of *Pomatorhinus* are found inhabiting Australia: *P. superciliosus*, *P. ruficeps*, and *P. temporalis*, the eastern and southern parts; and *P. ruberulus* the northern portion, where it takes the place of *P. temporalis* of New South Wales. *P. superciliosus* enjoys an extensive range of habitat, being found equally plentiful in Western Australia. *P. ruficeps* was discovered by a German Emigrant in South Australia; its habitat is chiefly the borders of the Darling and Murray Rivers.

The *Pomatorhini* have been placed by most authors among the Honey-eaters (*Meliphagidæ*); but Mr. Gould informs us (after a careful study of habitats and economy) that they have no affinity to that tribe whatever,—he has therefore placed them in a separate family, between the *Corvidæ* and *Meliphagidæ*, and I can myself testify that as far as our Australian *Pomatorhini* are concerned, they neither assimilate in their habits, actions, or nidification, to any of the numerous genera of Honey-eaters, for which Australia is so famous.

In Fig 1, is a very good representation of the eggs of *P. temporalis*. I found this, which is about the largest species, very plentiful on the Bell River, also in the districts of Wellington, and the Lachlan. They are usually met with in small troops, and not unfrequently on the ground, over which they hop and run with surprising agility and ease, and where they procure the

greater part of their food. They are very pleasing and active in their movements, but very garrulous and noisy, especially when disturbed. Sometimes a troop may be seen gently feeding upon the ground, hopping over it with a quick and easy motion, until some more watchful individual will give the alarm by a hoarse guttural cry, which is immediately taken up by the rest, as they fly off, emitting a garrulous croaking noise, to the nearest tree, settling upon the slanting trunks, hopping upwards by degrees and chasing each other to the ends of the highest boughs, from which they will often fly off, one after the other, to repeat the same actions elsewhere.

They breed chiefly in September, October, and November, making a large coarse nest of twigs slightly interwoven; the lower part is much rounded, the upper rather elongated, and sometimes drawn into a neck, the back twigs being brought forward so as almost completely to hide the small opening, which has, as it were, a thatch of twigs over its entrance. Very often too the twigs from the lower side project upwards, rendering it (seemingly) almost impossible for the bird to enter without disarranging them.

It is lined with a great quantity of grass or stringy bark, with which the eggs are frequently covered when the birds leave their nests. The top of some bushy tree, or the end of some thickly branched bough are the sites chosen for the nests, which, when in the former situations, are placed nearly upright, but when in the latter, upon their sides, being built of course to suit the boughs in which they are placed.

Several nests may be found within a few yards of each other in the same clump of trees, with birds sitting in each of them. The number of the eggs found in a nest varies from 5 to 10. My brother, Mr. James Ramsay, informs me that he has taken no less than fourteen from one nest, and in these cases believes them to be the joint property of several birds; the usual number, however, is 5, which are either much elongated or rounded in form, and not unfrequently have the ends of equal thickness; the medium size is one inch in length, by 9 lines in breadth. The ground colour is brownish, yellowish, or purplish-buff, covered with a most peculiar network of veins and hair lines,

running in various directions, both across and round the surface ; these lines are of a dark purplish brown. The colouring matter has the peculiarity of being easily rubbed off.

Mr. Gould remarks:—"The markings of the eggs may be more easily imagined, by supposing a hair or hairs to have been carelessly drawn over them after having been dipped in ink."

POMATORHINUS SUPERCILIOSUS.

The White-eyebrowed Pomatorhinus.—(Gould, B. Austr.,

Vol. IV., pl. 22.)

Pl. I., Fig. 2.

All that I have said with respect to the habits and actions of the former species, may equally well be applied to this. It is not, however, such a noisy species, nor found in such large troops. The nest is similar to that of *P. temporalis*, but smaller ; and has the entrance more completely covered by a thatch of twigs. The eggs are three or five in number ; their usual length is $10\frac{1}{2}$ or 11 lines, by $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 lines in breadth ; some are rounded in form, others more elongated. The ground color is of a brownish gray tinged with olive, clouded with purplish brown and greyish olive, and sparingly veined with dark bistre. Some specimens are of a uniform dull greyish olive brown, clouded with a deeper hue, and without veins, and have a clouded band round the centre. Like the foregoing species, this is frequently found upon the ground, hopping about with the greatest agility under the trees, especially during the early part of the day ; when flushed they fly off to the nearest tree, and commence to ascend it by a series of hops and jumps until they reach the end of the boughs, from which they fly off in a string. They are very sprightly and quick in their movements, and have the peculiarity of drawing their heads in and puffing out their feathers as they ascend the branches, looking like a number of brown balls bouncing among the limbs.

This species has a wide range of habitat, being found equally common on the Darling, Lachlan, Bell, and Murray Rivers, as well as over the whole southern portion of the country, and

in Western Australia. Upon the Bell River, and near the Lachlan, I found them very plentiful in company with the *P. temporalis*, and have frequently found several nests of both species built in the same clump of trees, for which purpose they show preference to the thick bushy tops of a species of *Acacia*, allied to the "Myall."

Mr. G. Krefft informs me that the nest and eggs of the *P. ruficeps* so closely resemble those of the *P. superciliosus*, that the one description will answer for both species. The eggs of the *P. ruficeps* have, however, more commonly a clouded band round the centre, which is also visible in some specimens of the eggs of *P. superciliosus*.

Specimens sent to me from the Darling River, as the eggs of *P. ruficeps*, are somewhat larger than one would expect from the size of the bird, and are lighter in colour, clouded with a purple brown, with a very few streaks of a darker hue, in length 10 lines by $7\frac{1}{2}$. The eggs of *P. rubeculus* I have not yet seen. This species is confined to the northern portion of Australia, where it takes the place of the *P. temporalis* of New South Wales. *P. temporalis* is the oldest known species, and was described by Latham under the name of *Turdus frivulus*.

XANTHOMYZA PHRYGIA.

The Wart-faced Honey-eater.—(Gould, B. Austr., Vol. IV., pl. 41.)

Pl. I., Fig. 3.

Although this species was at one time plentiful in our neighbourhood, it has of late years become rare, and can now only be looked upon as an occasional visitor. I found a few specimens feeding in the *Eucalyptus* trees the year before last (1863), but had not previously seen any since June, 1859, when they arrived in great numbers, and literally swarmed in the swamp-mahogany trees, *Eucalyptus* sp., which were then in bloom, their bright yellow and black plumage contrasting beautifully with the green foliage and still greener plumage of the various Parakeets, with which the tree was crowded.*

* Since these notes were written, this species has again visited us in immense numbers, and many pairs have remained and bred in the neighbourhood of Sydney, their stay lasting from August to December, 1865.

I met with numerous flocks of this species last year near Braidwood, traversing the bush from one blossom tree to another, squabbling and fighting with almost every Soldier Bird they came across, for they are rather inclined to be pugnacious, and will often indulge their propensity, particularly upon the smaller Honey-eaters, which manfully attack them in return.

They are usually very plentiful in the neighbourhood of the Bogan River. During my last visit to those parts I succeeded in finding several nests, and was not long in procuring their eggs also. As I expected, upon climbing up to the nests, I was immediately attacked by not only the parent birds but also by several of their feathered friends, attracted by the cries of their mates,—all gallantly keeping up the attack until I had reached the ground again, snapping their bills so close to my face that I stood no small chance of having my ears pecked off, and always flying at me from behind.

The nest is a neat cup-shaped structure composed of stringy bark, and lined with finer shreds of the same material. It is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across inside, by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, and placed between the upright forks of some tall sapling, or upon a horizontal bough. They breed during November and December, or perhaps earlier in some localities, and lay two or three eggs—10 to $11\frac{1}{2}$ lines long, by $8\frac{1}{2}$ to 9 lines in breadth. These, when freshly taken, are certainly among the most beautiful I have ever met with; but unfortunately, as in most bird's eggs, the bloom goes off, and the bright tint soon fades.

From my note book, I find that when first taken from the nest they are of a deep saturnine buff, spotted with irregular markings of a deeper hue, in some, evenly distributed over their surface, in others, more crowded at the larger end; there are also a few indistinct dots of greyish lilac dispersed over the surface; but these lilac dots are not visible in all specimens. I have one, however, in which greyish lilac spots predominate. The specimen from which the figure on our plate (Pl. I., Fig. 3) has been taken, is the largest and finest of its species that I have ever seen; all, however, are not of this form, some being more lengthened and less rounded.

This species of Honey-eater was one of the first known, and was described under various names, and placed in several genera by as many different authors; but as its habits and economy

became more perfectly understood, and ornithologists began to classify their birds more from their habits, &c., this species was finally placed among the Honey-eaters, and a new genus formed for its reception, viz:—that of *Xanthomyza*, of which, at present, it is the only species known. The curious miniature wart-like excrescences round the eyes and ears, have gained it the colonial name of the *Wart-faced Honey-eater*, while from its black and yellow plumage, it is called also the *Mock Regent-bird*.

PTILOTIS FUSCA.

The Fuscous Honey-eater.—(Gould, B. Austr., Vol. IV., pl. 44.

Pl. I., Fig. 4.

Of the genus *Ptilotis*, there are at present 16 species known, being the most numerous group of the Australian *Meliphagidæ*. “Nearly all the species (says Mr. Gould) are prettily marked about the face, or have the ear-coverts largely developed, and characterized by a coloring different from that of the other part of the plumage.”

Although the members of this genus are among the most brilliantly coloured of the tribe, this species has nothing in its plumage to recommend it, which may account for its being somewhat overlooked. I find little or no mention of its habits or economy, and nothing of its nidification, even in Mr. Gould’s magnificent work; although it is one of the most common species of our Sydney birds.

The fuscous Honey-eater breeds in September and the three following months, making a neat cup-shaped nest of stringy-bark, strengthened by the addition of a great quantity of cobweb; it is lined with fine shreds of bark, hair, and sometimes the silky down from the seed-vessels of the wild cotton, (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*.) It is usually placed among the twigs at the end of some horizontal bough, or among the bushy tops of the young *Eucalypti*. The Turpentine trees, (*Syncecarpia*) also afford favorite sites for their nests, which are $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches across by 2 inches deep. The eggs are two in number, from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 lines long, by

6 to 7 lines in breadth ; the ground color is of a deep yellowish buff, with spots of a deeper and more reddish hue, and a few of faint lilac, in some sprinkled equally over the whole surface, in others crowded, or forming a cone at the larger end.

In painting these eggs, as well as those of *Xanthomyza phrygia*, the true tint of color is only to be obtained by using light Saturnine red. The ground color of the eggs of *Ptilotis fusca*, upon fading, becomes flesh-yellow, and the markings yellowish or reddish brown, the lilac almost disappearing.

These Honey-eaters are usually found during the winter months, in small groups of from 5 to 10 in number ; it is not a migratory species, but remains with us all the year round, and is one of the numerous birds which frequent gardens ; it may be found in the orchards, either when the trees are in full bloom, flying round the blossoms in search of insects, or when the fruit is ripe. They seem to have a decided preference for the sweet juice of pears. This species of Honey-eater is, I believe, strictly confined to New South Wales.

PTILOTIS AURICOMIS.

The Yellow-tufted Honey-eater.—(Gould, B. Austr., Vol. IV., pl. 37.)

Pl. I., Fig. 5.

This beautiful Honey-eater is one of our most common species, and found very abundantly in the neighbourhood of Ashfield and Parramatta. It shows a decided preference for the more open parts of the bush clothed with underwood of *Acacia* and young *Eucalypti*, rather than the thick scrubby parts nearer Sydney.

Like most of the genus, the yellow-tufted Honey-eaters are very partial to fruit, and during the season, they resort to the gardens in great numbers, accompanied by many other species, and may often be seen squabbling over the over-ripe pears and oranges. They are very fond of exercising their pugnacious propensity upon the larger birds, Hawks, Owls, and even the sleepy-looking Goat-suckers are quickly attacked as soon as perceived ; even their own species, when wounded, and crying

out, come in for a share of their dislike. Often a dozen or more may be seen clustering upon a bough huddling up together, pecking at, and fighting with, each other, or screeching, as if holding a jubilee over some common enemy.

This is not a migratory species, but is always to be found throughout the whole year, and breeds much earlier than the generality of the tribe. We have eggs taken in the early part of June, and others found in October, November, and December. They have two, and sometimes three broods during the year; August and September being their favorite months for breeding.

With respect to its nidification (I will quote what I have already said upon the subject in vol. vi. of the "Ibis" page 244,) "I find upon referring to my note-book, that we captured two young, well able to fly, on July 18th, 1863; but during some seasons birds breed much earlier than in others.

The nest is a neat but somewhat bulky structure, open above, and composed of strips of stringy bark, lined with finer shreds of the same material, and the silky down from the wild cotton (*Gomphocarpus*.)

The site selected is usually some low bushy shrub, among the thick tufts of the *Blechnum*, (*B. Cartilaginum*) or carefully hidden in the thick rich clusters of the beautiful *Tecoma Australis*. The ferns and *Tecoma* seem their favorite places for nestling; among the clumps of the former, we have frequently found 3 or 4 nests within a few yards of each other, fastened to the stems and leaves of the ferns: sometimes they will place their nests among the dead leafy tops of a fallen *Eucalyptus*, or in gardens among the prickly branches of the orange trees; they may be also found, not unfrequently, suspended in a fork of the bough of a small bushy forest oak.

The total lengths of the nests are generally 3 or 4 inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in diameter, being inside 2 inches deep by $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 wide. The eggs, which are usually two in number, are of a pale flesh-pink tinged with yellowish buff, deeper at the thick end where they are spotted or blotched with markings much deeper in hue, and of a reddish-brown tint. In some, the markings form a zone near the larger end, in others, an irregular patch, with a few dots sprinkled over the rest of the surface; when freshly taken

they have a beautiful flush of pink ; some specimens are almost without marking of any kind, and like the eggs of most of our Australian birds, vary considerably in form. The usual length is from 9 to 11 lines by $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 lines in breadth.

In the nests of this Honey-eater, we occasionally find the eggs of a Cuckoo, (*Cuculus inornatus*) which closely resemble those of the Honey-eater, they may be distinguished however, by being of a uniform pale flesh-color or of a yellowish-buff, and seldom having spots or markings of any kind. We have one specimen of this egg, which has a very few dots of deep blackish and reddish brown ; in length they are $11\frac{1}{2}$ lines by $8\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth. A few days after the young Cuckoo is hatched, it commences to grow very rapidly, and soon fills up the greater part of the nest, unceremoniously treading on its foster brethren, and eagerly swallowing the greater share of the food which the parent-birds bring them, until the unfortunate rightful owners of the nest are either starved to death, or smothered by the weight of its body, and as soon as dead, are thrown out by the parent-birds, which seem to be quite proud of their foster nestling. This species of Cuckoo will sometimes deposit an egg in the nest of other Honey-eaters, as we have found them in those of *Melithreptus linulatus*, *Ptilotis chrysops*, and *P. fusca*. And upon one occasion an egg was found in the nest of *Zosterops dorsalis*.

On the 30th January, 1864, I shot a very beautiful variety of the yellow tufted Honey-eater, of a pale yellow color above and below, having the ear-coverts and tufts, front and sides of the head, the throat, outer webs of the tail, and wing-feathers brighter and of a deeper yellow, the shafts of all the feathers white, bill and claws brownish horn color, irides dull slate blue, feet and legs bluish lead color. This was not the only specimen, there were two others about the garden at the same time, but not in company with it. They seemed to be much scouted by the rest of their species, feeding quietly by themselves and not crying out at all. Several times, while I was about to shoot one of these Albinos, a yellow-breasted Robin, (*Eopsaltria Australis*) perched close beside it, took an inquisitive look in its face, and then, with a harsh squeak flew off again, as if quite disgusted with such a "freak of nature."

SEISURA INQUIETA.

The Restless Fly-catcher.—(Gould, B., Austr., Vol. II., pl. 181.)

Pl. I., Fig. 6.

This pretty Fly-catcher which is distributed over the whole of the South-eastern and Western portion of Australia, is one of our most interesting and lively species; among most school-boys it is known in New South Wales under the name of the Land-Wagtail, in contradistinction, I suppose, to the Water-Wagtail, (*Rhipidura Motacilloides*) to which it closely assimilates in plumage, nidification, and habits; and indeed, the name is not altogether inappropriate, inasmuch as the present species prefers to build its nest far away from the water, and not unfrequently high up among the branches of the trees, whereas that of the Water-Wagtail, is nearly always found in the vicinity of some creek or river, very often on a bough overhanging the water and within a few inches of its surface.

The restless Fly-catcher, is not a migratory species. During the winter months it frequents the gardens and orchards, and becomes exceedingly tame; it is often seen around the out-houses and yards, and not unfrequently hopping over the backs of the cattle and horses, doubtless in search of flies; it is always on the move, and well merits its name; runs lightly and quickly over the ground, wagging its long tail from side to side as it goes along.

Its note is loud and clear, but it also indulges in a guttural sort of squeak, uttered when flying, or settling on a bough, in addition to this, it has also a peculiar habit of poising itself in the air a few feet from the ground, and during this operation, emits a sort of gurgling sound not unlike the sharpening of an instrument on a grind-stone, on account of which, it has obtained the name of "The Grinder." This ceremony finishes by the bird darting down to the ground, seizing some worm or caterpillar, and flying off, uttering a loud squeak of satisfaction. Whether this is a sort of jubilation over some fine fat worm which it has espied lurking in the grass, I leave to others who understand the language of birds to decide.

The nest of this Fly-catcher, like those of most of the tribe, is round and cup-shaped, $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches across by $1\frac{1}{4}$ deep, and placed upon a horizontal bough over a fork, or by the side of an upright twig, it is chiefly composed of bark and grass, neatly interwoven; the lining is of grass, hair, or roots, and the edges often ornamented with lichen, fastened on by cobweb. It is usually placed at a considerable distance from the ground, and often at the end of some dead bough.

The eggs are two or three in number, from 9 to $10\frac{1}{2}$ lines in length, by $7\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth, rather rounded in form, having the ground color of a dull white, stained with spots and blotches of dull chestnut-brown and greyish lilac, the latter appearing as if beneath the surface. In most of the specimens, the spots form only a distinct zone nearer the larger end, but in some, are sprinkled over the whole surface. The birds are for the most part found breeding in October, November, and December, but sometimes earlier or later, as they feel inclined. They have two broods in the year.

EÖPSALTRIA AUSTRALIS.

The Yellow-breasted Robin.—(Gould, B., Austr., Vol. III., pl. 11.)

Pl. I., Figs. 7 and 8.

The nest of this species much resembles in form, those of the true Australian Robins of the genus *Petroica*, to which the birds also closely assimilate in their movements and habits, with the exception that the *Eöpsaltriæ* are lovers of the more unfrequented parts of the bush, while nearly all the members of the genus *Petroica* prefer the open and half cleared patches of land.

The nests of the yellow-breasted Robin are either placed in the upright fork of some small tree, or built upon some horizontal bough, often within two or three feet of the ground. It is a beautifully round and cup-shaped structure, 3 inches high by 2 inches across and $1\frac{1}{2}$ deep, composed of strips of bark, and lined, most frequently, with the narrow thread like leaves of the native oak, (*Casuarina*) and a few dry leaves of the *Eucalypti*. The edges and parts of the outside are studded with small pieces of

the mouse-ear lichen, and hanging from the sides, are long chips of bark, some of them 4 inches or more in length and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch wide, fastened on one above the other with cobweb, the lowest of them reaching several inches below the bottom of the nest.

The eggs, which are two or three in number, are of an apple green, or light greenish-blue color, spotted, blotched, or minutely dotted with deep brownish-red, yellow-brown, and obsolete spots of faint lilac. Some are thickly speckled all over so as almost to hide the ground color, and in these the yellowish-brown markings predominate; others are distinctly spotted, or have a zone of dots, or one large blotch at the thicker end without any other markings. They are in length $10\frac{1}{2}$ to 11 lines by 7 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth, and are usually found in September and the three following months.

Mr. Gould, in his "Birds of Australia," figures four species of *Eopsaltria*, two from Western Australia, but the other two, *E. capito*, and the one at present under consideration, (*E. Australis*,) are confined to the Eastern portion of our continent.

The yellow-breasted Robin is very common in the neighbourhood of Sydney, it prefers the thickly wooded parts of the bush, although it is sometimes found in the gardens and orchards. Its flight is short and rapid, and seems to be scarcely brought into use more than is necessary to flit from one tree to another. It is seldom seen among the higher branches of the trees, keeping near the ground where it obtains the greater part of its food. It is an extremely tame bird, scarcely troubling itself to get out of your way. If there is any "clearing" going on in the bush, or a woodman splitting timber, there also will be found our yellow-breasted friend perched transversely against the upright stem of the nearest tree, waiting for any grub or caterpillar that may be knocked out of the wood, and darting down, almost under the blade of the axe to seize its prey. Its usual cry consists in the continuation of a clear shrill piping note, kept up in the same tone and key often for the full space of a minute or more without the slightest variation, its tail sometimes bobbing up and down at each interval as if keeping time. When suddenly disturbed, it often utters a sort of squeak, and upon perching, jerks its tail up after the manner of the true Robins.

MICRÆCA MACROPTERA.

The Brown Fly-catcher.—(Gould, B., Austr. Vol. III., pl. ii.)

Pl. I., Figs. 9 and 10.

This bird, although one of our most common, and sombre-colored, is one of our sweetest songsters. At day-break it may be seen perched upon the dead top of some lofty *Eucalyptus*, pouring forth a song of the most cheerful and pleasing strain: its notes are varied, and may be heard at a considerable distance. Mr. Gould remarks that they resemble those of the Chaffinch (*Fringilla cælebs*). They have a decided preference for perching while singing upon the very topmost boughs of the most lofty trees, from whence they will dart off to capture some insect on the wing, and then return to complete their song. They are very tame, and fearless of man: and will frequently come and perch beside you when walking in the fields or bush; wagging their tails from side to side—as if perfectly sure that they were either privileged birds, or, on account of their dull plumage, not worth shooting.

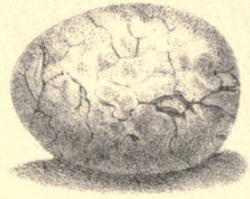
This the so-called “Tit-lark” of Australia, which is a general favorite, is both a summer and winter resident. They are constantly found about the fences and rails, and are not unfrequently seen on the roofs of houses, always in pairs, and occasionally seeking for spiders under the eaves, which they eagerly devour; and, if building at the time, will carry off the web to cement the nest. Last year a pair took possession of a large Oak-tree, near our dwelling-house, at Dobroyde, and afforded us much amusement in watching them: seeking for spiders and cobweb under the eaves and corners of the stables. One day, by watching one carry off a large piece of cobweb, my brother discovered its nest, placed in a fork near the end of a horizontal bough. While adding the cobweb, the bird sat in the nest, and, pushing itself round and round, stuck the web on the edges. The nest is small, but very neat and compact— $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch across, by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep—composed of grasses sunk in the fork of a horizontal bough; the edge is even with, or slightly raised above, the branches, and ornamented with small scales of bark, securely

fastened on with cobweb, and rendered so like the bark of the tree, that it is no easy task, for one who is unacquainted with its habits, to discover it. The eggs are two in number; but I remember two instances in which we found three in a nest: this, however, is very rarely the case. In length, they are from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 lines by 6 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ lines in breadth. They vary considerably in colour, some being of a beautiful bluish-green, with a zone of brownish-purple and greyish-lilac blotches round the centre, and a few dots over the rest of the surface; in others the spots are dispersed equally over the whole. As the eggs fade, the ground colour becomes very pale, and the markings turn to dull reddish-brown. This species has two, and sometimes three broods in the year. The peculiar instinct which birds have, of ornamenting the outside of their nests with small scales of bark and lichen which grow upon the same trees, is beautifully illustrated in not only the nest of the present species, but also in those of many other Australian birds: as in that of the Yellow-breasted Robin (*E. australis*), and more particularly in those of the Nut-hatch (*Sittella chrysoptera*), which are not only ornamented on the outside with scales of bark, from the same or similar branches, to which they are fastened, but the inside is carefully lined with small pieces of the mouse-eared lichen so arranged as to bear a very close resemblance to the eggs. The shortest and easiest way of finding the nest of either the Titlark or Nuthatch is to watch the birds. Any one accustomed to birds'-nesting can tell in a very short time, whether the birds have a nest or not, and when this fact is settled, nothing is easier than to watch the birds until they go to it.

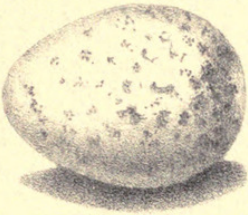
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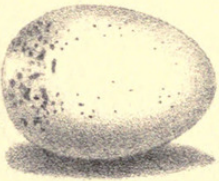
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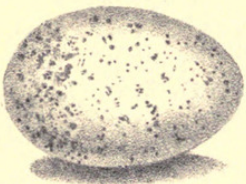
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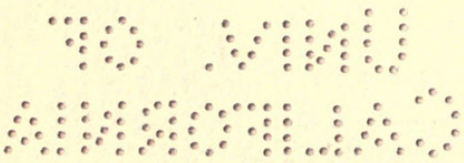
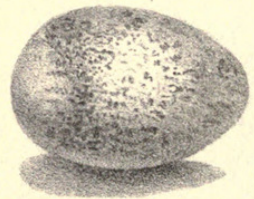
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