

NOTE ON *MALURUS LEUCOPTERUS*, QUOY AND
GAIMARD.

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ON referring to the original description and figure of *Malurus leucopterus*, in the Zoology and Atlas of the "Voyage de l'Uranie,"¹ I find that Gould had very good grounds for doubting if the bird figured and described by him under this name, in his "Birds of Australia,"² was not distinct from the species to which it had been originally applied by Quoy and Gaimard. Gould appears to have always entertained this doubt, for in his "Supplement to the Birds of Australia,"³ published many years after, in his remarks on *M. leuconotus*, he there writes—"and *M. cyanotus*, if the bird discovered by Quoy and Gaimard in the 'Voyage de l'Uranie,' on Dirk Hartog's Island, should prove to be different from the species found in New South Wales, which I think probable."

The following is Quoy and Gaimard's diagnosis of *Malurus leucopterus*, "*Malurus, capite, collo, pectore-dorsoque cæruleo-nigricantibus; alis albis; caudâ subcæruleâ.*" In their description the general colour is given as being of so dark a blue that it appears black, with the frontal half of the wings white, and their extremities brown; the tail also dark blue, but less so than the body. Their figure, which is taken from a drawing made by M. Arago at the time of its discovery, and stated to be of the natural size, represents a bird agreeing in colour with their description, and measuring about four inches and a half in total length.

The above diagnosis and description clearly does not apply to the cobalt-blue bird from New South Wales, figured and described by Gould, and which in future will have to be distinguished under his name of *Malurus cyanotus*.⁴

Since writing the foregoing Mr. Bernard Woodward, Curator of the Western Australian Museum, Perth, has kindly forwarded, among other photographs, to the Curator of the Australian Museum, Sydney, one of three mounted specimens of

¹ Voyage de l'Uranie, Zool., 1824, p. 104, Atlas, pl. xxiii., fig. 2.

² Gould—Bds. Austr., iii., fol., 1848, pl. xxv.

³ Gould—Bds. Austr. Suppl., 24, 1862, opp. pl. xxiv.

⁴ Gould—Handbk. Bds. Austr., i., 1865, p. 331.

a *Malurus*, recently described as new,⁵ under the name of *M. edouardi*. Judging by the description and photograph, these birds are, in my opinion, the true *Malurus leucopterus* of Quoy and Gaimard, described seventy-seven years ago. They were procured in December, 1900, by Mr. J. T. Tunney, a collector of the Western Australian Museum, on Barrow Island, off the coast of North-western Australia. Barrow Island is about three hundred and fifty miles in a direct line to the N.N.E. of Dirk Hartog, where the type of this species was obtained by Quoy and Gaimard. The scapulars, upper wing-coverts, and innermost secondaries of the adult male, which are white, show that *M. leucopterus* is closely allied to the more recently described *M. cyanotus*, and differs only from the latter species in having the general colour of the upper and under surface bluish-black, instead of cobalt-blue.⁶

⁵ Vict. Nat., xvii., 1901, p. 203.

⁶ The above note was sent last July to Melbourne for publication in the "Victorian Naturalist," but was temporarily withdrawn, pending an application to the Western Australian Museum, Perth, for the loan of the type.



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