

almost identical in the two birds, except that one is in a sharper key. The Bristle-Birds feed on beetles, earth grubs, and cranberries, and could be photographed in their home with ease. The Bristle-Bird is found at Anglesea, and also at Airey's Inlet, two tidal creeks between Point Addis and the Otway forest. There appear now to be no further belts of tea-tree north of Point Addis into which the birds can spread, so this fact will always keep them a remarkable restricted colony, which we trust will be of perennial interest to bird observers, and which we hope (being the nearest Bristle-Birds to Melbourne) will not suffer decimation at the hands of city folk.—A. G. CAMPBELL.

[N.B.—This is additional to notes in *Emu*, January, 1907, page 134.—A. G. C.]

* * *

NOTES ON AMYTIS (AMYTORNIS) VARIA, OR MARLOCK GRASS-WREN.—When walking through one of my paddocks on 13th June, 1908, hoping to get a shot with a 440 Winchester rifle at some Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*) that were killing lambs, my attention was attracted by what, at first glance, appeared to be a small banded ant-eater (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) running, as is their custom, at great speed with tail erect from some rough ground towards a clump of marlock scrub. A driving rain was falling at the time, which helped to form this impression, but immediately after a dark-coloured bird ran or fluttered close behind the supposed ant-eater, and then I knew I was watching something uncommon in bird-life. The clump of marlock was only about 12 yards by 2 yards, but a considerable amount of trampling heavily through it was necessary before the birds darted out from almost under my feet. One of them hopped on to a dead log at a short distance, and gave me a good view, for a moment or two, but, not thinking it any use to risk a shot with the 440, I hurried home (1½ miles) for my gun, but rain and wind increasing caused me to defer further investigations for that day. On three occasions shortly after the above date I systematically tramped all over the small stony hillock where the birds were first seen, but only once sighted them. They darted out of the same small patch of marlock as at first, after much trampling, and, coming out somewhat behind me, gave no chance of a shot. As with *Amytis striata* (which I had met in the north-west of this State), the speed of the birds is extraordinary. 21st June found me at the same locality, and almost immediately one bird was sighted in a fresh patch of marlock, but for some little time it gave no chance of a fair shot, and then disappeared in a tangle of fallen white gum limbs and dead leaves, which was surrounded by clumps of marlock in full bloom. Among these blooms numbers of *Meliphreptus brevirostris* (*leucogenys*, Milligan) were busily feeding, and a bullying Wattle-Bird (*Acanthochaera carunculata*) kept making angry dashes

through them to drive them away from the honey-laden flowers. Apparently the commotion above frightened the Grass-Wren, for it suddenly darted out, and, pausing momentarily in the shelter of the marlock stems, gave me the chance of a successful shot. Several subsequent visits failed to reveal any more of the Grass-Wrens, and it seems to me that the pair originally seen had, for some reason, been driven from, or left, their usual haunt, and temporarily lived on this small, barren hillock, over which I have tramped scores of times, no other marlock or similar class of scrub growing within $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Query, What became of the other bird? Probably a cat had taken it, as domesticated cats, gone wild, have been seen near that hill on different occasions. Two persons used to the bush, to whom I have shown the specimen secured, assure me they have seen the same bird (or very similar), but always in marlock, which, with mallee, mallet, and similar growth, stretches for miles east of the Great Southern railway. A description of the bird shot was read at the meeting of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria on the 10th August, and a detailed account has appeared in *The Victorian Naturalist* for September (vol. xxv., p. 86). Since the description mentioned above was forwarded by me, the Director of the Perth Museum has courteously sent me a skin of *Amytornis gigantura* (*megalurus*, Sharpe) on loan, for comparison with mine. *A. gigantura* was procured at Day Dawn in 1903, and described by Mr. A. W. Milligan as new. Day Dawn is situated 450 miles almost due north from Broome Hill, and is a much hotter and drier district than this, the average rainfall there being probably considerably less than half of what occurs here—viz., 8 inches against 22. As a full description of *Amytis varia* has already been published, there is no occasion to repeat it here, but comparison with the skin of *gigantura* shows the following points of difference in *Amytis varia*:—The whole plumage is much darker and richer in tone, the head especially being almost black, and the abdomen and flanks much darker than in *gigantura*, where the centre of abdomen is very light fawn. No trace of the rich chestnut side patches which occur on each side of the chest of *gigantura*. No reddish lores as in *gigantura*. The white striations on the head, hind neck, and mantle are much more numerous, and they are also more pronounced on the flanks in *varia*. Measurements of tail and wings are considerably larger in *varia*. I may remark that the numerous small bars across the tail feathers occur in *both* skins, and apparently are present in most of the species of *Amytornis*, though not always mentioned in descriptions by writers. With regard to "marlock," I have adopted this spelling, as Mr. Milligan used it in connection with his trip to the Stirling Ranges, and Mr. A. J. North has spelt it marlock in describing the scrub where Mr. C. Masters obtained specimens of *Malurus pulcherrimus*, although I am informed by a botanical expert that, according to philologists, the accepted orthography of the word is "maalok" or "maaloch," an aboriginal word signifying thicket, and that to spell it "mar" is wrong (although aborigines have no written

language), and that the shrub appears to be a variety of *Eucalyptus obcordata*. Whoever is correct, there is no doubt that the thickets composed of it are "happy hunting grounds" for ornithologists. Last week I secured in that growth specimens of *Malurus pulcherimus* and of an Emu-Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*).^{*}—TOM CARTER. Wensleydale, Broome Hill (W.A.), 31/8/08.

From Magazines, &c.

"A NIGHT WITH THE BIRDS ON LAWRENCE ROCKS" is the account of a romantic outing by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, C.M.Z.S., which appeared in *The Victorian Naturalist* for May, vol. xxv., pp. 12-24. Lawrence Rocks are situated at the entrance of Portland Bay, Victoria, and are the breeding-places chiefly of Gannets, Cormorants, Petrels, and Penguins. Mr. Mattingley took his excursion last Christmas, when he found the majority of the birds with downy young. The article is accompanied by reproductions from excellent photographs, namely:—"Gannet (*Sula serrator*) Rookery," showing a congregation of about 400 birds, with some on the wing, and "Dove-Petrel (*Prion desolatus* (?)) and young." General readers, as well as naturalists, will enjoy Mr. Mattingley's very descriptive and entertaining article.

* * *

BIRDS OF INKERMAN (N.Q.)—An article, interesting to Australian ornithological students, by Mr. Collingwood Ingram, F.Z.S., appears in the July (1908) *Ibis*, entitled "The Birds of Inkerman Station, North Queensland." The collection contains 93 species, including two new to science—namely, *Neositta magnirostris* and *Sphecotheres stalkerii*.

Inkerman is situated approximately 50 miles south-west of Townsville and about ten miles from the Burdekin River, and is described as "covered with an open forest, but in many places the gum-trees are very thinly scattered over the ground. The two commonest species, and those that give character to the landscape, are the Moreton Bay ash and the blood-wood; the former being by far the most numerous. But here and there are also trees of other kinds—pandanus, leichhardt, acacia, bottle-tree, and others; although, of course, the typical *Eucalypti* always predominate. Situated at wide intervals over nearly the whole of the station are narrow sheets of water—'lagoons,' as they are locally termed. These are often deep and sunk between steep banks, and not a few are thickly grown with blue water-lilies or with the more luxuriant lotus-lily."

^{*} The Western Australian form of the Emu-Wren differs from the eastern bird by the general upper surface being lighter coloured (greyish instead of brownish), and by the width of each curious tail-feather being only about half the width of those of the eastern examples.—A.J.C.



Carter, Thomas. 1908. "Notes on Amytis (Amytornis) varia, or Marlock Grass-Wren." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 8(2), 103–105. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu908094n>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/88007>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu908094n>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/379542>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

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>.