

124. *PODICIPES NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ* (Stephens), Black-throated Grebe.

*Podiceps gularis*, Gould, Birds Aust., fol., vol. vii., pl. 81 (1843);  
Ogilvie-Grant, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vol. xxvi., p. 519 (1898).

Adult male and female, 4/2/02.

[This species is very tame. At Ellamurd's, where they were feeding upon insects within a few yards of where I was standing, the female bird I unknowingly shot when it was on the nest. There was an egg in the oviduct.] It seems the bird weighs down the nest, which was nearly 4 inches out of the water, according to Mr. Rogers. [There was a tape-worm in the intestines of the female specimen about 9 inches in length.]

125. *LOPHÆTHYIA (PODICIPES) CRISTATA* (Linnæus), Tippet Grebe.

*Podiceps australis*, Gould, Birds Aust., fol., vol. vii., pl. 80 (1844);  
Grant, Brit. Mus. Cat. Birds, xxvi., p. 502 (1898).

*Lophæthyia cristata*, Sharpe, Hand List of Birds, vol. i., p. 114 (1899).

One adult skin.

126. *STILTIA ISABELLA* (Vieillot), Pratincole.

*Glareola grallaria*, Gould, Handbook Birds Aust., ii., p. 243 (1865).

*Stiltia isabella*, Sharpe, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vol. xxiv., p. 51 (1896).

Adult females, 28/12/01.

127. *PORPHYRIO BELLUS* (Gould), Blue Bald-Coot.

*Porphyrio bellus*, Gould, Birds Aust., fol., vol. vi., pl. 70 (1841);  
Sharpe, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vol. xxiii., p. 202 (1894).

Adult female, 27/1/02.

[Birds now laying (27th January). Four clutches, each 5, 6, 6, 7 eggs. For nest the grasses are beaten down, and reeds are placed upon them. Several nests of eggs found on 22/2/02 contained five eggs or eight eggs, and the larger number lay in bowls that appeared to have been flattened by the birds to hold better the eggs. The nests were bulky, being 16 inches in breadth and 14 inches in depth.]

(To be continued.)

## The Plumage Phases of *Ptilotis leucotis*, Lath.

BY ROBERT HALL, MELBOURNE.

IN January, 1902, a skin of a Honey-eater was handed to me by Mr. Wallen for identification.

It did not agree with any description known to me, but by appearances I considered it might be a young bird of the White-eared Honey-eater.

Subsequently I was able to secure skins that showed this particular one to be a phase between the nestling and the adult.

From a number of skins before me I am able to note seven distinct phases in the plumage development of the species.

The most important phases, and those which supply new information, are *a* and *b*, the skin *a* being the nestling, with yellow ear coverts, and *b* an immature bird with ear coverts partly yellow and partly white, in about equal proportions. In another skin the yellow is simply a wash upon a portion of the white, while in a third a flush of yellow is merely visible. In the young\* stages the throat is either dull brown or yellowish-brown, or faint yellow with a brown crescent as the indicator of the dark throat, which is brown before the final moult for black. The abdomen also varies between dull tawny and yellow.

The crown is olive in the early phase, grey and olive in a later moulting stage, and finally grey streaked with black. The dorsal surface is duller in the early stages than in the later, which is in agreement with those of most species of birds.

Measurements of adult males are supplied as under, to show the amount of variability in the sizes ( $g^1$ ,  $g^2$ ).

Specimens *b* to *g*, inclusive, show very clearly the maturing of the species as far as its plumage is concerned, for they represent six clear phases.

Specimens *h* and *j* show an adult male and an adult female practically to have the same measurements.

Specimens *j* and *k* show two adult females—one (*k*) small, and possibly below the average, while the other (*j*) is about as large as adult females usually are.

Young birds (as in *d*) are sometimes larger than adult birds (as in *h*) of the same sex. The rule, as we have it, is to recognize the male as larger than the female, which is probably correct in a large series of skins.

Brief descriptions of the important phases are :—

Specimen *a*.—Nestling, 31/12/02, Torquay, Victoria.

In colouration it agrees with *b*, excepting the ear coverts, which are uniform yellow. Wing, 2.25 inches; tarsus, 0.85 inch; culmen, 0.35 inch; tail, 1.3 inch.

Specimen *b*.—Juvenile, sex not marked, December, 1899, Murray River, Victoria.

Throat and chest dull olive-brown, remainder of under surface yellowish-olive; ear coverts, anterior half white, posterior part yellow, and beneath a portion of the white at its base; head dull yellowish-olive, and slightly duller than the rest of the upper surface; superciliary stripe and lores black. Total length, 7 inches; wing, 3.5 inches; tarsus, 0.95 inch; culmen, 0.5 inch; tail, 3.35 inches.

Specimen *c*.—Juvenile female, Melbourne, Victoria, 12/4/98.

\* Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., vol. ix., p. 241, has it :—"Young and immature birds have the throat and fore-neck dull brownish-grey instead of black, and the yellow in the plumage is much less developed than in the adult." Nothing is said about ear coverts.

Throat, centre as in *b*, sides brownish, black being new feathers ; ear coverts white, flushed with yellow ; crown and upper surface as with *b* ; superciliary stripe and lores brownish-black ; margins of tail feathers less yellow than in *b* ; under surface of body more yellow than in *b*, and much less yellow than in adult. Total length, 7 inches ; wing, 3.06 inches ; tail, 3.25 inches ; culmen, 0.5 inch ; tarsus, 0.95 inch.

Specimen *d*.—Juvenile male, Box Hill, Victoria, March, 1900.

Throat and chest as in *b* ; ear coverts white, very faintly washed with yellow ; superciliary stripe and lores brownish-black ; crown and upper surface very much as in *b* and *c*. Total length, 7.15 inches ; wing, 3.35 inches ; tail, 3.5 inches ; culmen, 0.5 inch ; tarsus, 0.85 inch.

Specimen *e*.—Juvenile male, Melbourne, Victoria, 12/4/98.

Whole of throat, chest, and superciliary stripe nearly as black as in adult ; ear coverts pure white ; forehead dull yellowish-olive as in younger stages, while the crown and occiput are moulting in favour of the grey of the adult ; remainder of upper and under surfaces as in adult. Total length, 7.75 inches ; wing, 3.7 inches ; tail, 3.6 inches ; tarsus, 0.9 inch ; culmen, 0.55 inch.

Specimen *f*.—Juvenile female, Box Hill, Victoria, 10/4/01.

A moult of the olive-like feathers of forehead and crown in favour of the grey of the adult is very distinct. About half of the old feathers persist in irregular patches, while the greys are also irregularly scattered. No colour change is noticeable. Total length, 7.5 inches ; wing, 3.3 inches ; tail, 3.65 inches ; tarsus, 0.9 inch ; culmen, 0.5 inch.

Specimen *g*<sup>1</sup>.—Adult male, Box Hill, Victoria, 17/7/96.

Example giving largest measurements. Total length, 9 inches ; wing, 4.05 inches ; tail, 4.3 inches ; tarsus, 1 inch ; culmen, 0.5 inch.

Specimen *g*<sup>2</sup>.—Adult male, Heytesbury, Victoria, 5/8/96 (*per* Mr. George Graham).

Example giving smallest measurements. Total length, 7.5 inches ; wing, 3.2 inches ; tail, 3.45 inches ; tarsus, 0.85 inch ; culmen, 0.5 inch.

Specimen *h*.—Adult female, date uncertain, Oakleigh, Victoria.

Small-sized female. Total length, 6.9 inches ; wing, 3 inches ; tail, 3.3 inches ; tarsus, 0.9 inch ; culmen, 0.5 inch.

## A Trip to Oyster Cay, N. Queensland.

BY E. M. CORNWALL, CAIRNS.

ON 15th November a party of six left Cairns in the oil launch *Industry* at 4.30 a.m. for Oyster Cay, Upolu Reef, and Green Island, to inspect the marvellous bird colonies and coral reefs of those places. As the almost full moon sank, a soft glow proclaimed the coming dawn, and when day broke Green Island