

The female is so similar in colouration that dissection is necessary to determine the sex.

On account of the general dusky-brown appearance of the plumage, I propose the name of Brown Crow-Shrike (*Strepera fusca*), as suggested by the South Australian Ornithological Association at a meeting held on 12th May, 1905.

The descriptions are taken from birds collected by me on Eyre Peninsula during a trip in October, 1899, and again while conducting the scientific expedition during the ninth congress of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, at Warunda Creek, Central Eyre Peninsula, in October, 1909. On both occasions I was accompanied by Capt. S. A. White, of the Reedbeds, near Adelaide, who also secured specimens. The birds on both occasions were seen principally in the timbered country, where their notes rang out clearly in the frosty mornings.

The birds resemble mostly *Strepera plumbea* of Western Australia, but are more dusky-coloured in general appearance, and show a greater amount of white in the wing.

Locality.—Eyre Peninsula, South Australia.

The nest is similar to the general class of *Strepera* nests, composed of sticks, lined inside with finer fibrous substance, which makes a neat cup-shaped hollow.

The eggs are three in number. A clutch taken at "Kapinka," Stokes, in the Koppio Ranges, in Central Eyre Peninsula, on 15th September, 1898 (now in my collection), may be described as follows:—General ground colour light creamy-brown, much lighter in appearance than the eggs in general of the *Strepera* family; the markings are fine spots of light brown and purplish-brown, the latter spots appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell, the markings being more numerous at the larger end. Eggs elongated in shape, and tapering gradually towards the smaller end. Texture of the shell moderately fine, with a somewhat glossy surface. Dimensions in inches:—(1) 1.70 x 1.18, (2) 1.62 x 1.12, (3) 1.52 x 1.12.

Victorian Sericornes.

By A. G. CAMPBELL, POMONAL, VICTORIA.

(Read before the Bird Observers' Club, 14th April, 1910.)

MR. Gregory M. Mathews, in a recent letter to me, wished for some reliable observations on two Victorian species of Sericornes—*S. frontalis* and *S. osculans*.

The Australian Museum authorities, it appears, have recently stated that the two species are but one, and represent, one the mature, and the other the immature stage. With this I cannot agree. There has to my mind always been an obscurity in the genus, and for this reason I have been collecting data and material for some years and from various parts of the State. I will now state this much, however—that is, that I believe that there are two

species—one of browner plumage, inhabiting only the mountainous portions of the State ; and the other a common species, being found throughout in the more open country.

When specimens are examined they tally exactly with those described by John Gould as *S. frontalis* and *S. osculans* respectively. That illustrious naturalist had eyes for a specific difference which others of later day have been dull to see. It is this—*S. osculans*, he states, has an obscure dark subterminal band to the outer feathers of the tail. Note the adjective “obscure,” for the word exactly describes the character. On spreading out the tail feathers between the fingers the dark band may be distinguished, particularly on the inner webs of the outer feathers. Now there is one specimen of *Sericornis* that never shows this character, and it is the bird obtained from what constitutes the Lyre-Bird country—the deep mountain recesses of Dandenong and Healesville Ranges, of Macedon, Upper Yarra, and Baw Baw, and of like localities in the Alps and in Gippsland. This is, I take it, *S. frontalis* of Gould. The difference in the two species is a nice one, but reliable. I may add that the following simple key is also to be relied upon :—

Head and back rich brown colour, similar to rump and tail.

S. frontalis.

Head and back olive colour, not like rump, which is brown.

S. osculans.

The following is the key to the whole of the genus in Australia* :—

I.—General colour grey ; lores white ; throat rufous in male.

S. brunnea.

II.—General colour brownish ; lores black, slaty, or tawny.

A.—Shoulder feathers edged white ; lores black (male), or slaty (female).

I. White tips to outer tail feathers and dark subterminal band.

(a.) Forehead black ; throat white, barely spotted.

S. lævigastrea.

(b.) Forehead brown, like crown ; throat thickly spotted.

S. maculata.

2. No white to outer tail feathers ; tail band obscure or absent.

(a.) Obscure subterminal band on outer tail feathers ; head and back olive, dissimilar to rump.

Upper throat white ; abdomen whitish ; flanks brown ; legs light brown. *S. osculans*.

Upper throat speckled like lower ; abdomen and flanks olive ; legs dark brown, *S. humilis*.

(b.) No dark subterminal band on tail.

Broad black crescent on lower throat ; wing, 2.4 inches. *S. gutturalis*.†

* For localities see Mathews' “Handlist,” Suppl. *Emu*, vol. vii.

† = *Oreoscopus gutturalis*.

No black crescent; head and back rich brown,
like rump.

Wing, 2.35 inches. *S. frontalis*.

Wing more than 2.4 inches. *S. minimus*.

B.—No white on wing feathers.

(a.) Throat yellow; lores black (male), or slaty (female);
wing 2.7 inches. *S. citreogularis*.

(b.) Throat brownish; lores tawny; wing 2.2 inches.
S. magnirostris.

The Helmeted Honey-eater (*Ptilotis cassidix*).

BY F. E. WILSON AND L. G. CHANDLER.

(Read before the Bird Observers' Club, 27th January, 1910.)

AS so little is known concerning the habits of the rare and beautiful Helmeted Honey-eater (*Ptilotis cassidix*), the following notes, collected during the past two seasons, may be of interest. The habitat of this species is the eastern portion of Victoria, possibly extending into the southernmost corner of New South Wales. Our notes have been gathered in the Beaconsfield district, 30 miles east of Melbourne, where several pairs of birds have taken up their quarters. The locality has many creeks, and dense scrubs of tea-tree, sword-grass, prickly acacia, &c., with tall white gums (*Eucalyptus*) spreading their branches above.

The Helmeted Honey-eater somewhat resembles the Yellow-tufted Honey-eater (*Ptilotis melanops*), but is about half an inch longer, and may be easily distinguished by the line of upright, bristling, golden feathers which adorn the head. It has a variety of notes, two of which are monosyllabic. After using the monosyllabic notes, the head is jerked upwards and the tail slightly raised. One of the notes, generally uttered when the bird is flying from tree to tree, closely resembles the familiar note of the White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus atricapillus*).* Another may be translated as "Churl, churl, churl, churl;" while the nesting note, which is the most beautiful of all, and which is usually uttered when the bird is sitting at the side of the nest, may be rendered thus—"Jor, jor, jor, jor, jor, jiree, jiree, jiree, jiree," the "jiree" portion being a semitone higher. During the nesting season these Honey-eaters are extremely savage, and vigorously attack other birds that come near them. Harmonious Shrike-Thrushes (*Collyriocichla harmonica*), White-shouldered Caterpillar-catchers (*Lalage tricolor*), and Coachwhip-Birds (*Psophodes crepitans*) all find it safer to keep at a respectful distance from *P. cassidix*. Helmeted

* Scientific names according to Mathews' "Handlist."