

the under side, as occurs in typical *P. flaveolus*, for the scarlet and more sombre green of *P. adelaidæ*, largely corresponds with the decreasing rainfall.

My investigations lead me to the conclusion that *P. fleurieuensis*, *P. adelaidæ*, and *P. flaveolus* are all one species. The types of each race are certainly widely different, but undoubtedly intermediates exist, making one doubt the advisability of referring to any of them as other than varieties of the one dominant form.

The following notes on some of the skins examined should be of interest:—

Platycercus flaveolus (Gould).—Of two adult birds shot out of the same flock at Wirrabara, September, 1916—(1) shows red above beak, slight red wash over crown, upper side pale yellowish-green, and a considerable amount of red distributed over the general yellowish ground-colour of the under side. (2) Also red forehead, but the reddish-orange extends over the crown; upper tail coverts, outer ones broadly fringed with red, and some of the scapulars showing red; under side, breast and tail coverts bright red, with some yellow distributed throughout. Both were adult males. (3) Skin from Melrose, also in the Flinders Range, shows still more red both in upper tail coverts and scapulars. (4) Skin obtained at Watervale, April, 1914, by Mr. Parsons, has on the under side the general yellowish ground-colour of *P. flaveolus*, but the forehead and crown are bright red; the upper tail coverts have a considerable number of red feathers distributed throughout, and the general tone of the upper side is deeper than is usual in this species; some of the scapulars are brightly tipped with red, and the secondaries red-fringed; the breast and under tail coverts bright red and yellow; bright red distributed throughout the under side. (5) Skin taken by myself on River Murray, 12 miles above Mannum, is fully as red as any of the preceding, but has the mantle and shoulders almost black.

P. adelaidæ (Gould).—(6) Shot by myself at Kangarilla, in the Adelaide Hills, on 10th November, 1914, is almost identical with the foregoing, except that the pale yellowish-green fringe to the feathers of the mantle and scapulars is more marked.

BIRD NOTES from Tasmania.

BY H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., R.A.O.U., WEST DEVONPORT (TAS.)

The Black Strepera on the "Roof of Tasmania."—A friend who spends a great deal of time on the mountain plateaux of our island tells me that in a certain valley at high altitude it is the custom of the large "Black Jay" (*Strepera arguta*) to flock in the spring of the year in order to feed upon the native berries (*Astroloma pinifolium* and others) which are there in profusion. At this time the usually noisy *Strepera* is very silent, and one does

not know the birds are there until right in amongst them. Even then they do not care about moving far, and when forced to fly often do so in silence, although at other times the famous "kling-klang" notes (from which the species derived its name) are very much in evidence. My friend has the idea that the assembly is partly for the purpose of choosing mates for the ensuing season, but I think this is not so; the probability is that this fine bird, once mated, retains his partner for life. It has struck me that there may be some narcotic quality in the berries consumed at this period, which may account for the comparative sluggishness of this usually very alert species.

An Unusual Visitor.—A loud, clear, oft-repeated double whistle attracted my attention early in the morning of the 11th November, and, on going out to inspect, I found a Caterpillar-eater (*Lalage tricolor*) in one of the gum trees. He was very shy, and flew on my appearing, but next morning was there again; failing, however, to find a mate, to my regret he made a permanent departure. During a long residence on the coast, this is the first time I have encountered the bird.

Is the "Summer-Bird" a Migrant?—Some months ago a correspondent found fault with me (in a genial way) for referring in some notes which appeared in *The Emu* to our Summer-Bird or Small-billed Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus parvirostris*) as a migrant. I was referred to Campbell's "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," p. 97, in which the author mentions having received the skin of a bird shot at Burnie in July, also that numerous observers testified to having seen the species in mid-winter. I admit the possibility of obtaining skins at that period. Exactly the same may be said of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), yet no one will, I think, deny that at least 90 per cent. of the latter recross Bass Strait to winter on the Australian mainland. My reasons for regarding our *Graucalus* as non-resident are briefly these:—(1) In springtime (September) I usually notice small parties coming across Devonport from a N.W. direction and passing away to S.E. or inland; (2) in autumn (March and April) small companies pass along this coast, flitting in a leisurely way from one group of gums to the next, but all coming from a general easterly direction and making west to north-west; (3) the very name by which the species is universally known here indicates that the early settlers regarded its advent as a sign of the approach of the warm season.

Some Birds in the Bush.—In October Mr. L. A. Thruston and myself had a run to the Gawler, on the North-West Coast, and, while my friend tried his lures on the elusive trout, I went off over hill and dale to find the Gawler Falls. After breasting a long hill with wooded bank on one side and deep timbered gully on the other, I reached more open country, and saw a nice lot of Firetails (*Zonæginthus bellus*), whose delicately-pencilled

plumage was finely contrasted by the brilliant red at the base of tail feathers. After ascending and descending a few more hills, the stream was again reached, and, turning sharp to the left along a narrow foot-track, the roar of the falls was soon heard. In the bush through which the track presently passed the persistent call of the Olive Thickhead (*Pachycephala olivacea*) struck upon the ear; those strange notes—"I'll-whit'-yu, I'll-whit'-yu," the first syllable somewhat drawled, the second clear and incisive—seemed in harmony with the voice of the waters.

During the present month of November, Mr. and Mrs. Thruston took me for a pleasant day's outing to the Mersey, above the shale mine, where the river is very charming. Some Robins' nests in hollows of charred stringy-bark trees were found, probably those of the Flame-breast (*Petroica phænicea*), as these were the only Robins seen in the vicinity. The young had left the nests, which were about 4 feet from the ground, and formed of strips of stringy-bark interwoven, the lining being of fine bark from the same species (*Eucalyptus obliquus*). The mud nest of the Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) was also found, about 9 feet from the ground, in a hollow, burnt-out gum tree. We boiled the billy on a shingle-bank adjacent to the stream, and while there noticed a Pipit (*Anthus australis*) very busily picking insects from among the shingle-pebbles. A Wood-Swallow (*Artamus sordidus*) was coursing up and down over the water, taking insects as the common Swallow does, but at a much higher elevation (15 to 30 feet), and in a more leisurely fashion, while the Welcome Swallow beat swiftly backwards and forwards just over the surface, and the Tree-Martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) generally kept a few feet higher. Seemingly they were in different strata of insect life. A pair of Flame-breasted Robins—the male in fine plumage—perched on snags projecting from the water, while a male *Malurus* of almost black coloration flew into a sapling near by. The sweet calls of the Grey-tailed Thickhead (*Pachycephala glaucura*) fell frequently upon the ear, much difference being observed in the call-note of individual birds; none of its congener, the Olive Thickhead, was observed in this locality. The charming notes of the Yellow-throated Honey-eater (*Ptilotis flavigula*) were much admired in the belt of saplings close to where Mr. Thruston's car was left while we explored the bush.

MR. E. J. Banfield, of Dunk Island, Queensland, is troubled with brown snakes. His dog killed one lately about 6 feet long, and through the wound a hen's egg was extruded, which shows that these reptiles are not above eating eggs when they get the chance. —W. H. D. LE SOUËF. Melbourne.