

ART. II.—*Description of some Australian Birds' Eggs
and Nests collected at Bloomfield, near Cooktown,
Queensland.*

By D. LE SOUËF.

[Communicated by Professor Baldwin Spencer.]

[Read 8th March, 1894.]

CRESCENT-MARKED ORIOLE (*Mimeta flavo-cincta*).

These birds were occasionally seen in the open country, and I found their open nest on 3rd November, and secured the parent birds; it was suspended from a fork near the end of a thin bough of a Melaleuca tree, about forty feet from the ground, and difficult to get at. It contained two eggs on the point of hatching.

The tree was growing beside a waterhole, and a Quoy's crow-shrike had its nest in an adjoining tree. The nest is very similar in appearance to that of a Friar bird, and is outwardly composed entirely of strips of bark off a small species of Eucalyptus which grows in damp localities; the inside of the structure is lined with tendrils from the creepers in the scrub, which was about 300 yards away, it measures externally seven inches in length by five inches broad, with a depth of four and a quarter inches, and internal measurement three and three-quarter inches long by two and three-quarter inches broad, and three inches in depth. The eggs are nearly oval in form and of a pinkish-white colour, with a few rounded markings of a dark brown colour, especially towards the larger end. There are also some light grey markings, which have the appearance of being under the surface of the shell. They measure $A \frac{20}{16} \times \frac{14\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch

$B \frac{22}{16} \times \frac{16}{16}$ inch.

This egg has not been described before.

NORTHERN SPHECOTHERES (*Sphecotheres flaviventris*).

These birds were plentiful in the open country, and often seen in company with the Friar birds, the bright yellow markings on the breast of the male making him conspicuous.

We noticed them building on a small white gum tree on 18th October, and, going to the tree again on 25th October, found five of their nests on the tree, and also one of the silvery-crowned leatherhead; they were all built near the end of thin boughs, and only one could be got at by our native climber. We could see from below how many eggs were in each nest, the full clutch being three. Our blackfellow had a long thin stick, and, the nests he could not get at, he rolled the eggs out of one by one, and I caught them all uninjured in my hat as they fell. The nests were built of vine tendrils and small twigs, cup-shaped, and rather shallow, and, as before stated, could easily be seen through from below. The one I took measures externally five inches in diameter by three inches in depth, internal diameter three and a quarter inches by one and three-quarter inches in depth. The eggs are of a greenish-grey colour, with various sized irregular markings of a brown colour, with other fainter markings of a purplish hue, they both predominate towards the larger end, the eggs are nearly oval, tapering at the smaller end and measure $A \frac{20\frac{1}{2}}{16} \times \frac{15}{16}$ inch $B \frac{20}{16} \times \frac{15}{16}$ inch $C \frac{21}{16} \times \frac{15}{16}$ inch.

This egg has not been described before.

CAT-BIRD (*Ailuredus maculosus*).

The curious harsh note of this bird was often heard in the scrub and several nests found; they seem to prefer building near the top of a slender tree, about fifteen feet from the ground, although on one occasion we found one within two feet, built on a creeper, but that was an exception; the structure is bulky and composed principally of leaves and twigs, mixed with fine rootlets and lined with finer tendrils, the external diameter of one I took is nine inches, and four and a half inches in depth, internal diameter five and three-quarter inches, and depth two

inches, but they vary in size ; the eggs are two in number, and of a pale cream colour and glossy. One pair taken on 27th October measures $A \frac{27}{16} \times \frac{18\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch $B \frac{28}{16} \times \frac{19\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch.

COACH-WHIP BIRD (*Psophodes crepitans*).

The call of this bird was occasionally heard in the dense scrub on the higher lands, but the bird itself was seldom seen, it does not appear to be as large as our Victorian one, and it utters a slightly different note, its eggs also are smaller and of a lighter colour. We found its nest on 25th October with two eggs in, built in a thick mass of creepers about three feet from the ground, it was composed chiefly of vine tendrils and small twigs, the ground colour of the eggs was bluish-white, with irregular black markings, slightly more numerous at the larger end, there are also similar markings of a greyish colour appearing as if under the shell, they taper gradually towards the smaller end and measures $A \frac{18}{16} \times \frac{13\frac{1}{4}}{16}$ inch $B \frac{19}{16} \times \frac{13}{16}$ inch.

BLACK-FRONTED FLYCATCHER (*Monarcha trivirgata*).

These flycatchers were seen only in the scrub, and were very shy birds. All the nests we found were built near the top of slender young trees, about four feet from the ground, and always near a watercourse ; their pretty cup-shaped nests were, comparatively speaking, easily seen, they were outwardly composed of fine shreds of bark, pieces of skeleton leaves, a little moss, and all round the nests were fastened pieces of white spider cocoons, and a few of the softer green coloured cocoons made by other varieties of spiders. It gave the nests a curious appearance. All the inside was lined with very fine black rootlets and tendrils, having the appearance of horsehair, its external diameter is two and three-quarter inches by three and three-quarter inches in depth. Two eggs were always found in the nests on different dates in October, and the eggs in various stages of incubation. The eggs have a white ground colour, and are minutely speckled over with reddish-brown spots, which are very much more numerous at the larger end. A pair I took on 28th October measured $A \frac{14}{16} \times \frac{10}{16}$ inch $B \frac{14}{16} \times \frac{10}{16}$ inch.

QUEEN VICTORIA RIFLE BIRD (*Ptilorhis victoriæ*).

These birds were plentiful in the scrub, and their harsh note often heard, but the birds themselves generally kept out of sight, although they are by no means shy. We were fortunate in securing their nest on 29th October, built in a fan palm not far from the ground, and it contained two eggs, which seems to be a full clutch, another nest was being built in a Cordyline, only eight feet from the ground, when I left, and the eggs taken on 20th November. The nests vary in size, and are very loosely put together, consequently are built either in some thick creeper, or in a fan or other palm, and built close to the trunk and held up by the butt of the stem of the leaf; the hen bird, when sitting on her nest, is not easily disturbed. The external diameter of the nest found on the fan palm was six inches by three and a half inches in depth, internal diameter three and three-quarter inches by two inches in depth, and was composed almost entirely of vine tendrils. These birds often work pieces of the cast skins of snakes into their nests; I saw a piece, on one occasion, three feet long, most of which was hanging down loose. The two eggs were beautifully marked, having a reddish-cream ground colour, and irregular sized streaks of different shades of brown, commencing at the larger end and tapering off to a point, some of the streaks, which are more numerous at the larger end of the egg, are very short, others again continue three-quarters of the way down the surface of the egg and are broader than the short ones; the eggs, which are nearly oval in shape, have a beautiful gloss on them and measure $A \frac{21}{16} \times \frac{15\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch $B \frac{21}{16} \times \frac{15}{16}$ inch.

SUPERB FRUIT PIGEON (*Ptilinopus superbus*).

This beautiful little pigeon was seen on several occasions in the scrub, and we found several of their nests, each with a single egg in, and also secured the parent bird. They seem to prefer building on the higher part of the ranges. We found one nest, with a young one in, built in a small shrub about two feet from the ground, another on 27th October on a small bush which was growing some two feet out of the crevice of a rock overhanging a precipice, and it was with some difficulty that I managed to

secure the egg, others again from eight to ten feet from the ground in small trees. The nest measures three inches in diameter, and is composed of very few twigs. The egg is oval in form, and the one I got on the date before mentioned measures $\frac{22}{16} \times \frac{14\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch.

ALLIED FRUIT PIGEON (*Carpophaga assimilis*.)

These large pigeons were far more often heard than seen in the leafy tops of the dense scrub as they fed on the fruit, and frequently on passing underneath the high fruit-bearing trees, we heard the fruit dropping on the ground, showing the pigeons were busy overhead feeding, and we had to look a long time before we could make them out, their green colour making them more difficult to detect. Their nests, which were four inches in diameter, and built of small twigs, were found on several occasions, generally on a thin branch of a small tree some ten to fifteen feet from the ground, and frequently in trees overhanging streams; only one egg was found in each nest. The three I have were taken on 23rd and 27th October, and 3rd November, and measure $A \frac{24}{16} \times \frac{17}{16}$ inch $B \frac{26}{16} \times \frac{17}{16}$ inch $C \frac{25\frac{1}{2}}{16} \times \frac{17}{16}$ inch.

EWING'S FRUIT PIGEON (*Ptilinopus ewingii*).

This beautiful little pigeon was seen in the scrub on the higher land near Bloomfield, but specimens were difficult to secure in the thick vegetation. We were fortunate in finding two of their nests on 24th October, one on the banks of the Annan River, in a small tree about eight feet from the ground, it contained a young bird newly hatched, and the hen bird let us approach within three feet of her nest before she flew off. The other nest was placed in a somewhat similar situation, and contained one fresh egg. They were unusually lightly built, with a few small sticks, and two and a half inches in diameter, and it looked as if the egg could hardly remain on when the bird was off the nest, the egg which is oval in form, and white, measures $\frac{20}{16} \times \frac{13\frac{1}{4}}{16}$ inch.

This egg has not been described before.

LONG-BILLED GREEN PIGEON (*Chalcophaps longirostris*).

This bird inhabits the northern portion of Australia, and its habits are very similar to its southern ally *Chalcophaps chryso-chlora*.

It is generally to be found on the ground and near streams in the shade of the thick vegetation. We only succeeded in finding one nest and one egg, and that on 5th November, and secured the parent bird. The structure was very lightly built, and not more than ten feet from the ground, and was placed near the end of a thin bough; the egg is white, and measures $\frac{18}{16} \times \frac{13\frac{1}{2}}{16}$ inch.

This egg has not been described before.

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (*Microeca flavigaster*), Gould.

This little bird is found in the northern portions of Australia, generally in the open forest country and is fairly plentiful, its cheery note being often heard.

Its beautiful little nest, one of the smallest of Australian birds' nests, was found at Bloomfield, near Cooktown, on 25th October, 1893, and I secured the parent birds. It was built on the dead upper branches of a small tree, about fifteen feet from the ground, and contained one partially incubated egg; there was, apparently, no room for another. It was cup-shaped, the outside being covered with small pieces of bark fastened on with cobwebs at the upper end and hanging, being similar in colour to the bough on which it is built, making it very difficult to detect. Cobwebs are also wound round the nest over the bark, and also round the branch, as if to make the nest more secure; the rest of the structure is composed of fine shreds of bark and grass, very compactly put together. It measures externally one and a half inches in diameter, by three-quarters of an inch in depth, and internal diameter one and a quarter inches by half inch in depth.

The egg is a greyish-white ground colour, spotted with irregular shaped markings of various shades of brown, with underlying markings of grey, especially towards the larger end.

It measures $\frac{13}{16} \times \frac{9}{16}$ inch.

This egg has not been described before.

[APPENDIX.]

Notes on a new species of Arses or Flycatcher.

By A. J. CAMPBELL, F.L.S.

It is with pleasure I have to record an addition (a new species) to the list of Australian avi-fauna. During a successful collecting trip to Northern Queensland, Mr. Dudley Le Souëf, Assistant-Director Zoological Gardens, Melbourne, returned with many specimens of Natural history, new to science, amongst which there appeared a Flycatcher, evidently of the genus *Arses*, founded by Lesson. This genus of exceedingly elegant birds, mostly in simple black and white garb, embraces five hitherto known species—four confined to the New Guinea region, and one to Northern Queensland. The sixth species, or last discovered one, differs from the other Queensland bird in possessing a frill or colour upon the back of the neck, and again differs from the other Frilled-necked Flycatchers of the New Guinea region, by having a broad band of black across the breast, but resembles most of all the Little Frilled-neck Flycatcher (*A. aurens*, Sharpe).

The new species was discovered by Mr. Le Souëf last November (1893), on the Bloomfield River about fifty miles south of Cooktown, Northern Queensland. Mr. Le Souëf informs me that the bird is peculiarly a denison of the thick palm scrubs. Its movements are graceful, and the white frill, which appeared to be erect, imparts a singular appearance to the bird, and serves to at once arrest the eye of the observer. Mr. Le Souëf thought its actions somewhat resembled those of the Tree-creeper (*Climacteris*), especially in its mode of ascending the under side of holes of trees and of scrub in search of insect prey—its chief food. Mr. Le Souëf only saw one pair in addition to a few single birds, which were observed either in the morning or towards evening.

I have proposed the name *Arses terræ-reginæ* for this new species, which may be known on the vernacular list as Le Souëf's

Frilled-necked Flycatcher. In connecting the discoverer's name with this interesting bird, I deem it an honour due to him for his indomitable perseverance and diligence as a field naturalist. Moreover, the name of Le Souëf (in part connection with his father, Mr. A. C. Le Souëf) is a household word amongst field workers and zoological institutions in Australia.

I exhibit here to-night, for comparison, the two Australian *Arses*, namely, *kaupi* and *terræ-reginæ*. During my own excursion to Northern Queensland, 1885, I secured a pair of Kaup's Flycatchers in the Cardwell Scrub. The one exhibited is the female, now in possession of our local taxidermist, Mr. A. Coles; the other was taken over by the the National Museum.

Arses terræ-reginæ, Campbell.

Male.—Head, including ear coverts and side of face, velvety black. Upper part of back, shoulders, broad band across the breast, glossy or bluish-black. Wings, except where blending into a brownish shade at the primaries, and tail, black. Tibial plumes, dusky. Surrounding the back of the neck is a pure white frill or collar joining a white throat and chin. Abdomen, part of under wing coverts, and lower portion of the back also white. In the specimen under consideration there appears some patches of parti-colour on the back, indicating possibly that the bird has not reached mature plumage. In life a narrow disc of beautiful bluish wattle surrounds the eyes, which are dark brown. Bill (narrow) steel-blue; feet black. Total length, 6·3 inches; bill (from gape), ·75; culmen, ·4; wing, 3·25; tail, 3·; tarsus, ·73.

Female.—Judging by analogy, probably resembles those of the other frilled-necked species, in being generally dusky brown or rufous in colour.



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