

THE BIRDS OF THE CHINCHILLA
DISTRICT.*

BY

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(Communicated by Henry Tryon, 7th August, 1885.)

THE district, the avifauna of which I have attempted to describe, is situated about 150 miles in a direct line to the W.N.W. of Brisbane, on the banks of the Condamine River; and though the area examined has been necessarily somewhat limited it may be considered typical of a large extent of territory lying immediately to the south and west of it. The Bunya Mountains and the Toowoomba Ranges with their continuation in the Little Liverpool Range, forming a portion of the great Cordillera of Eastern Australia, present a formidable barrier between this and the coast districts, and an obstacle to the assimilation of their bird fauna; whilst the direct communication of this country, by means of the Condamine and Balonne, with the Darling and Murray river areas, and the absence of mountains to the S.S.W. will on the other hand explain the occurrence of birds usually supposed to affect more southern parts, or the possibility of intercepting other birds in the course of their migrations to and fro between the north and south.

This country of Chinchilla is very flat, with a few sandy ridges, and its otherwise uniform surface is only broken by the channels cut by the Condamine and the streams contributing to

* It is due from me to confess my obligations to Mr. H. Tryon for having compiled this paper from notes which were made at his instigation.—K.B.

swell its bulk. The soil is for the most part of a mixed sandy nature, except where patches of black soil occur; and the vegetation is that of a "lightly timbered country," with characteristically dry "brigalow" scrubs of greater or less extent, and open well-grassed pockets here and there. The trees in the timbered country are limited almost entirely to a few species of eucalyptus, but on the edges of the brigalow scrubs are many kinds of small trees and shrubs, such as species of *Capparis*, *Grevillea*, *Cassuarina*, *Alstonia*, *Atalantia*, *Myoporum*, and others, few of which, however, would invite the presence of fruit-eating birds. Amongst the more lowly woody plants several malvaceous genera are represented, and the grasses are both abundant in species and very prolific in seed. Here, as in districts further west, the whole aspect of nature, and especially that due to the element of bird life, is considerably influenced in its presentment by prevailing meteorological conditions; a fact which will explain the occurrence at Chinchilla in seasons differing from those obtaining during my visits, of additional birds to those which I mention. Whilst I was making the observations here given, the weather, on both occasions of my visit, was somewhat dry, with a few heavy showers of short duration. These visits were made to Chinchilla, during the four latter months of 1882 and from April to the end of June of the present year, for the purpose of procuring fossil bones which were known to occur there, and with the secondary object, especially on the latter occasion, of collecting the animals of the district.

The best represented families of birds are:—The family of warblers—*Sylviadæ*, of which there are eight species; the cuckoo-shrikes—*Campephagineæ*, of which they are four; the flycatchers represented by five; the thick-head shrikes by five; the crow family by eight; the honey-eaters proper, with what Wallace calls the flower-peckers, by twenty-one; the finches by five; the woodswallows by four; the kingfishers by four; the parrots by twelve; the pigeons by eight; and the birds of prey by nine.

Examples of almost all the 140 birds included in the following enumeration have been shot by me, and except in the case of a few critical species I have little doubt concerning the accuracy of the determinations given in the following census:—

Aquila audax, *Lath.* The "Eaglehawk."

Falco lunulatus, *Lath.* The White-fronted Falcon.

Hieracidea berigora, *Vig. and Hors.* The Brown Hawk, seen in October.

Tinnunculus cenchroides, *Vig. and Hors.* The "Kestrel."

Accipiter cirrhocephalus, *Vieill.*

A. torquatus, The "Sparrow Hawk."

Milvus affinis, *Gould.* The "Kite."

Elanus scriptus, *Gould.* The Letter-winged Kite.

Ninox strenua, *Gould.* The Great Owl of the Brushes.

There were a pair of these large owls which frequented the neighbourhood of my camp, especially when the nights were darkest. They uttered a cry of *more-pork*, but the sound was deeper and more voluminous than that used by the boobook owl. The male bird when shot had an opossum, of which the head had been eaten off, in its claws.

Ninox boobook, *Lath.* The Boobook Owl.

Œgotheles Novæ-hollandiæ, *Vig. and Hors.*

Podargus strigoides, *Lath.* The Tawny-shouldered Podargus.

Chætura caudacuta, *Lath.* The Spine-tailed Swift.

Hirundo frontalis, *Quoy and Gaim.* The Welcome Swallow.

The first of these birds which I noticed, on its northward journey, was in the middle of May, and I did not meet with this swallow again until 12th June.

Lagenoplastes ariel, *Gould.* The Fairy Martin.

Merops ornatus, *Lath.* The Bee-eater, was here in the fall of the year.

Eurystomus pacificus, *Lath.* The Dollar Bird, which I obtained here in December. These birds remain in the locality as far as I have observed until February.

Dacelo gigas, *Bood.* The Laughing Jackass.

Halcyon sanctus, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Sacred Kingfisher.

Halcyon Macleayi, *Jar. and Selb.* Macleay's Kingfisher.

Alcyon azurea, *Lath.*

Artamus sordidus. I observed this Wood Swallow (for the first time on the 6th June) on its northward migration.

Artamus minor, *Vieillot.* The Little Wood Swallow, which left here during the middle of April.

Artamus personatus, *Gould.* The Masked Wood Swallow; is here during the summer months.

Artamus superciliosus, *Gould.* The White-eyebrowed Wood Swallow; is here during the summer months, and remains until May. I saw one on 11th May.

Pardalotus punctatus, *Temm.* The Spotted Diamond Bird; is rather a scarce species at Chinchilla, as far as my experience goes.

Pardalotus striatus, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Striated Diamond Bird.

I have included under this specific name four specimens—three females and a male. They are evidently the local representatives of this species from which they differ in having the first and third primaries only, instead of the whole number, edged with white. The speculum in each example is uniform scarlet coloured. What is the range of this race has yet to be determined.

Pardalotus assimilis, *Ramsay.*

A further example of this section of the diamond birds may be with some doubt referred to this species. It has the third and fourth primaries as well as the first, edged with white, and a reddish-yellow speculum.

Pardalotus melanocephalus, *Gld.* The Black-headed Diamond Bird.

Strepera graculina, *White.* The Pied Crow-shrike.

Strepera anaphonensis, *Tem.* The Grey Crow-shrike.

Gymnorhina tibicen, *Lath.* The Piping Crow-shrike.

Cracticus robustus, *Lath.*

C. nigrogularis, *Gld.* The Black-throated Crow-shrike.

C. torquatus, *Lath.*

C. destructor, *Temm.*

Grallina picata, *Lath.* The Magpie Lark.

Graucalus melanops, *Lath.*

Graucalus mentalis, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Campephaga humeralis, *Gould.* The White-shouldered Campephaga; found here in September, being a migratory bird in these parts.

Pachycephala gutturalis, *Lath.* The White-throated Thick-head.

Pachycephala rufiventris, *Lath.* The Rufous-breasted Thick-head.

Colluricincla harmonica, *Lath.* The Harmonious Shrike-thrush.

Falcunculus frontatus, *Lath.* The Shrike-tit.

Oreoica cristata, *Lewin.* The Crested Oreoica.

Chibia bracteata, *Gould.* The Drongo-shrike; which is not a stationary denizen of this district.

Rhipidura albiscapa, *Gould.* The White-shafted Fantail; is probably here throughout the year.

Sauloprocta motacilloides, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Black Fantail.

Seisura inquieta, *Lath.* The Shepherd's Companion.

Miagra plumbea, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Leaden-coloured Fly-catcher. I noticed here in April, it flies further north as winter comes on.

Micræca fascians, *Lath.* The Brown Fly-catcher.

Gerygone albogularis, *Gould.* The White-throated Gerygone.

Gerygone fusca, *Gould.* The Brown Gerygone.

I have referred to this species, a sprightly little bird which frequents the tall gum trees, in the top-most branches of which it is ever busy in its quest for insects. It has the bill and legs black, and the eyes brown. I shot one example on the 13th of May.

Smicrornis brevirostris, *Gould*.

S. flavescens, *Gould*.

Petroeca goodenovii, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Red-capped Robin.

As scarce in this as in the coastal districts of the colony.

Melanodryas cuculata, *Lath.* The Hooded Robin.

Eopsaltria australis, *Lath.* The Yellow-breasted Robin; a common bird in the southern colonies where it also breeds.

Malurus cyaneus, *Lath.* The Blue Wren.

Malurus lamberti, *Vig. and Horsf.* Lambert's Blue Wren.

Malurus melanocephalus, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Acanthiza uropygialis, *Gould.* The chestnut-rumped *Acanthiza*.

This bird is to be met with in this locality throughout the winter and summer months. It is one of the rarest of the *Acanthizas*, and this western country appears to be its true habitat. It is a very active little bird, creeping through the thick bushes on the edge of the scrubs in quest of insect food. Its habits and general appearance render it difficult to procure.

Geobasileus chrysorrhous, *Quoy and Gaim.*

Chthonicola sagittata, *Lath.*

Anthus australis, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Australian Pipit.

Sphenæcus galectotes, *Temm.* The Larger Grass Bird.

Stictoptera Bichenovii, *Vig. and Horsf.* The Double-barred Finch. I found a nest of this bird containing young ones, 11th May, 1885.

Ægitha temporalis, *Lath.* The Red-eye.

Aidemosyne modesta, *Gould.* The Plain-coloured Finch.

Stagenopleura guttata, *Shaw.* The Spotted Finch.

Pœphila cincta, *Gould.* The Banded Finch.

Chlamydodera maculata, *Gould.* The Spotted Bower Bird.

Mimeta viridis, *Lath.* The Green Oriole, which is tolerably plentiful here in April.

Corcorax melanorhamphus, *Vieill.* The White-winged Chough.

Struthidea cinerea, *Gould.* The Grey *Struthidea*.

Corvus australis, *Gmel.*

Pomatostomus temporalis, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Pomatostomus superciliosus, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Ptilotis lewinii, *Swains.* Swainson's Honey-eater.

Ptilotis plumula, *Gould.* The Plumed Ptilotis.

Ptilotis penicillata, *Gould.* The White-plumed Honey-eater.

Ptilotis chrysops, *Lath.*

Plectorhyncha lanceolata, *Gould.*

Meliphaga phrygia, *Lath.* The Warty-faced Honey-eater.

I met with a small flock of these birds, which I have never before seen in Queensland, on 7th July. Mr. E. P. Ramsay, F.R.S., however, records their occurrence in the Wide Bay and Rockingham Bay Districts. [Proc. Lin. Soc., N.S.W., Vol. II., pg. 189].

Acanthogenys rufogularis, *Gould.* The Spiny-cheeked Honey-eater. A bird confined to the interior of Australia, and, as far as I am aware, not met with previously so far north.

Philemon corniculatus, *Lath.* The Common Leather-head.
Philemon sp.

I obtained three specimens (one male and two females) which had the yellow colouration of the breast, which is said to be characteristic of the immature birds of the above species. They, however, altogether exceeded the measurements of the seven examples of *P. corniculatus* which I secured. Moreover, I had no reason, at the time of skinning them, to consider the birds otherwise than adult.

Philemon citreo-gularis, *Gould.*

Entomyza cyanotis, *Swainson.* The Blue-faced Honey-eater.

Melithreptus brevirostris, *Vig. and Hors.* [Trans. Lin. Soc. XV., p. 315].

Melithreptus gularis, *Gould.*

Melithreptus albogularis, *Gould.*

Myzantha garrula, *Lath.* The "Common Minah" of the colonists.

Dicæum hirundinaceum, *Shaw.*

Zosterops cærulescens, *Lath.* The Grey-backed White-eye.

Zosterops, *sp.*

Climacteris scandens, *Temm.* The Brown Tree-creeper.

Climacteris lencophæa, *Lath.*

Sitella leucocephala, *Gould.* The White-headed Sitella.

Amongst all the birds of this species which I observed, and in those which I shot (3 males and 1 female), I did not remark a single example with the conspicuously white head, which is noticeable in these birds—especially the old cocks—which frequent the coast districts. In fact, the heads of the Chinchilla Sitellas could only be styled white in a qualified sense. I also noticed that the female bird was possessed with a shorter and stouter bill than the male.

Cacomantis pallida, *Lath.* The Unadorned Cuckoo; I observed here in the summer of 1882, but no Cuckoos winter in the district.

Cacatua galerita, *Lath.* The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Here, as everywhere else in Australia, and represented by a large-sized race.

Calyptorhynchus Solandri, *Temm.* (*C. Leachii*, *Kuhl.*)

Calyptorhynchus funereus, *Shaw.*

Aprosmictus scapulatus, *Bechst.* King's Parrot.

Aprosmictus (*Ptistes*) *erythropterus*, *Gould.* The "Red Shoulder."

Platycercus pallidiceps, *Vig.*

Euphema elegans, *Gould.* The beautiful Ground Parroquet.

Lathamus discolor, *Gould.* The Swift Lorikeet.

I have never before met with this bird so far north, but it is common enough in Victoria, being found accompanying *Trichoglossus pusillus*, *Shaw*, and other birds of associated habits, and feeding on the honey of the various eucalypti.

Trichoglossus multicolor, *Gmel.* The "Blue Mountain."

Trichoglossus chlorlepidotus, *Kuhl.* The Scaly-breasted Lorikeet.

Trichoglossus pusillus, *Shaw.* The Little Lorikeet.

Chalcophaps chrysochlora, *Wagl.* The Little Green Pigeon. A scarce bird here.

Leucosarcia picata, *Lath.* The Wonga Pigeon.

Phaps chalcoptera, *Lath.* The Bronze Wing.

Geophaps scripta, *Temm.* The Squatter Pigeon.

Lophophaps plumifera, *Gld.* The Plumed Bronze Wing.

My observations would lead me to infer that this is a rare bird in the district, as I only met with a single specimen. This was on the dry sandy ridges, and in the middle of summer.

Erythrauchæna humeralis, *Bonp.* The Barred-shouldered Dove.

Geopelia tranquilla, *Gould.* The Peaceful Dove.

Geopelia (*Stictopelia*) *cuneata*, *Lath.* An uncommon bird in the Chinchilla country.

Talegallus Lathamii, *Gray.* The Scrub Turkey.

Synoicus australis, *Lath.* The Swamp Quail.

Dromaius Novæ-Hollandiæ, *Lath.* The Emu.

Chloriotis australis, *Gray.* The Plain Turkey.

Ædicnemus grallarius, *Lath.* The "Thick Knee" or Night Plover.

Lobivanellus lobatus, *Lath.* The Spurred-Winged or Wattled Plover.

Ægialitis nigrifrons, *Cuv.* The Dotterell.

Threskiornis strictipennis, *Gould.* The White Ibis.

Geronticus spinicollis, *Jameson.* The Straw-necked Ibis.

Grus australasianus, *Gould.* The Native Companion.

Ardea pacifica, *Lath.*

Ardea Novæ-hollandiæ, *Lath.* The Blue Crane.

Nycticorax caledonicus, *Lath.* The Nankeen Heron.

Chlamydochen jubata, *Lath.* The Wood Duck.

Anas superciliosus, *Gmel.* The Grey Duck.

Nyroca australis, *Gould.* The White-eyed Duck.

Pelecanus conspicillatus, *Temm.* The Pelican.

Graculus stictocephalus, *Bon.* The Little Black Shag.

Graculus leucogaster, *Gould.* The White-bellied Shag.

Plotus novæ-hollandiæ, *Gould*. The Snake Bird.

Podiceps australis, *Gould*. The Dab Chick.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1885.

IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS EXCELLENCY SIR ANTHONY MUSGRAVE,
K.C.M.G., PATRON OF THE SOCIETY; A. NORTON, ESQ.
M.L.A., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. Clement L. Wragge, of the Ben Nevis Observatory, was introduced as a visitor.

NEW MEMBERS.

Alexander Corrie, Esq., Brisbane; J. Hamilton, Esq., M.L.A.; E. Mansfield, Esq., Brisbane; D. Mapleston, Esq., Brisbane; B. D. Morehead, Esq., M.L.A.; W. Kinnaird Rose, Esq., Brisbane; H. H. A. Russell, Esq., Milton; C. J. Stevens, Esq., M.L.A.; J. Stevenson, Esq., M.L.A.; and J. Thomson, Esq., M.B., etc.

DONATIONS ANNOUNCED.

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"Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria," Vol. XXI. Melbourne, 1885. From the Society.

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