

pallidus); Bronze Cuckoo (*Lamprocoryx plagosus*); Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*); White-backed Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosternum*); Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*); Fairy Martin (*H. ariel*); Red-cap Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*); Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*); Restless Flycatcher (*Seisura inquieta*); Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*); Rufous Whistler (*P. rufiventris*); Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*Graucalus novae-hollandiae*); *Cinnamon Ground-Bird (*Cinclosoma cinnamomeum*); *Thick-billed Grass-Wren (*Diaphorillas modesta*); *Striated Grass-Wren (*D. striata*); *Black-faced Wood Swallow (*Artamus cinereus*); Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*); Grey-backed Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*); *Crimson Chat (*Epthianura tricolor*); Orange Chat (*E. aurifrons*); Gibber-bird (*Ashbyia lovensis*); Chestnut-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus ruficeps*); White-winged Blue Wren (*Malurus cyanotis*); Striated Diamond-bird (*Pardalotus striatus*); *Cloncurry Honeyeater (*Meliphaga penicillata*); Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*); Ground-Lark (*Anthus australis*); Fire-tailed Finch (*Zonacginthus bellus*); Chestnut-eared (Zebra) Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*); Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*); Black-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*); and White-backed Magpie (*G. hypoleuca*).

Mr. Aiston has, since our visit, resigned from the South Australian Police Force. It is reported that shooting of the birds on the lagoon is not now prevented and this splendid sanctuary is in danger.

Re-Discovery of the White-backed Wren, *Malurus leuconotus*, Gould.

By J. R. KINGHORN and TOM IREDALE, Australian
Museum, Sydney.

A little over five years ago, Mr. E. L. Troughton, a zoologist on the staff of the Australian Museum, made a collecting trip to South Australia, where many valuable specimens were acquired; among them being a number of birds, one of which was identified as *Malurus leuconotus* and placed in the reference collection without further notice being taken of it.

A few days ago one of us (Iredale) was sorting out some Wrens to illustrate a lecturette to the N.S.W. Branch of the Ornithologist's Union, when he immediately acclaimed one of them as the long-lost White-backed Wren. After a brief consultation we decided to draw up this account relative to its history.

In the Proceedings, Z.S., 1865, p. 198, Gould described *Malurus leuconotus* from the "Interior of Australia," "precise locality unknown," though he at the same time added *Artamus melanops* from Central Australia, collected by Mr. S. White at St. a'Becket's Pond, in lat. 28 deg. 30 min. (10 miles south-east of Farina); later, in his Supplement to the Birds of Australia, he figured this species, pl. 24, and stated that it was forwarded to him by Mr. Galbraith, of Machrihanish Station, South Australia. The White-backed Wren was eventually included in all Australian

lists, but Ogilvie Grant (*Ibis*, 1909, p. 675), and North (in "Nests and Eggs," ii., p. 217), both of whom examined many named examples, decided that none of them exactly agreed with Gould's description, and that *M. leuconotus* was not distinct from *M. leucopterus*, = *M. cyanotis*. Carter (*Ibis*, 1910, p. 653), agreed with North and Ogilvie Grant, and added that "the appearance of more or less white depends a good deal upon the making of the skin." Recently in the *Ibis*, 1917, p. 589, pl. 10, Mr. Tom Carter, in collaboration with Mr. G. M. Mathews, determined that the White-backed Wren had been based on a freak skin of the common and well-known Blue Wren, then called *M. cyanotis*, and this decision has been accepted by most if not all Australian ornithologists.

The specimen collected by Mr. Troughton came from the banks of a dry creek, in the vicinity of Mt. Lyndhurst, 30 miles east of Farina, S.A., as the following note from his field diary will show: "White-backed Wren—the white back of the small bird showed up clearly against the dark colouring of the other parts, while I followed it amongst some low bushes on the flats and along the side of a dry creek." It is quite possible that Gould's bird came from this or a near-by district, in view of the vicinity of St. a'Becket's Pond, and possibly Machrihanish Station to Farina and Mt. Lyndhurst. We have examined many specimens in the Australian Museum on which Mr. North wrote under both names, but as the blue feathers extend down from head to tail the scapulars alone being white, they are undoubtedly *M. cyanotis*. Contrary to this, the specimen collected by Mr. Troughton has the blue of the head ending abruptly half-way down the neck, while the whole of the back as well as the scapulars are white, no blue being present at all, and there is no suggestion that the neck ever bore long blue feathers, as shown in Mathews and Carter's figure (quoted above). Our specimen is a good one, and agrees perfectly with Gould's description.

We have much pleasure in acclaiming Mr. Troughton's specimen as a representative of the long-lost, probably very local, but quite distinct bird, *Malurus leuconotus*, and we consider that this species should be at once re-instated in Australian lists. As Gould's type is apparently lost, the specimen in the Australian Museum will become the neotype.

Wanted to Buy.

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The Emu, Part 3, Vol. I.; Horn Expedition to the Centre of Australia; Sturt's Expedition; Eyre's Expedition; Gould's Synopsis; Gould's Birds (Heads). Price to F. E. Howe, "Athenæ," Bryson St., Canterbury, Vic.



Kinghorn, James Roy and Iredale, Tom. 1924. "Re-Discovery of the White-backed Wren, *Malurus leuconotus*, Gould." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 24(1), 59–60.

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