

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES OF THE GENUS
MALURUS.

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MALURUS ASSIMILIS, sp. nov.

Adult male.—Forehead, crown, and sides of the head purplish-blue, passing into a rich cobalt on the feathers round the eye and the ear-coverts; sides of the neck and a collar on the hind-neck velvety-black; mantle and upper portion of the back purplish-blue; lower portion of the back and rump velvety-black; scapulars chestnut-red; wings brown, the quills narrowly edged externally with brownish-white; tail dull blue, all but the two central feathers tipped with white; a triangular-shaped mark in front of the eye, the cheeks, throat, and upper portion of the breast deep black, the feathers on the sides of the breast tipped with deep purplish-blue; remainder of the under surface dull white, slightly tinged with pale brownish-buff on the flanks and under tail coverts; thighs brown; bill black; legs and feet dark fleshy-brown; iris dark brown. Total length, 5 inches; wing, 1.9; tail, 2.8; bill, 0.35; tarsus, 0.8.

Adult female.—General colour above brown; wings brown, the quills narrowly edged externally with brownish-white; tail dull blue; lores and a narrow circle of feathers round the eye rich chestnut; cheeks, sides of the neck, and all the under surface dull white washed with fulvous, paler on the throat; sides of the breast and flanks fulvous-brown; bill reddish-brown; legs and feet dark fleshy-brown; iris dark brown.

Habitat.—Gulf of Carpentaria, inland portions of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, Central Australia.

Types.—In the Australian Museum, Sydney.

I purpose distinguishing this species by the vernacular name of Purple-backed Superb Warbler.

A nest of this bird in the Museum collection, taken by the late Mr. K. H. Bennett at Mossgiel, New South Wales, in October, 1885, is a dome-shaped structure, with a narrow entrance near the top; outwardly it is formed of fine silvery-white dried grasses and flowering plant stalks, the inside being slightly lined at the bottom with plant down. Externally it measures 5 inches in height by 3 in width, and across the entrance 1 inch. It was built in a Needle Bush, *Hakea leucoptera*, at a height of 5 feet from the ground, and contained three eggs. The eggs are oval in form, the shell being close-grained and its surface smooth and lustreless. They are of a dull-white ground colour, which is sprinkled over with dots, spots, and blotches of faint pinkish-red, the markings predominating, as usual, on the larger end. Length—(a) 0.62 x 0.5 inch;

(b) 0.63 x 0.5 inch ; (c) 0.65 x 0.47 inch. A set taken by Mr. James Ramsay at Tyndarie measures—(a) 0.62 x 0.5 inch ; (b) 0.66 x 0.47 inch ; (c) 0.65 x 0.47 inch.

The above-described species belongs to that section of the genus *Malurus* in which the adult males are distinguished by their chestnut shoulders, and is more closely allied to *M. lamberti*. For a number of years past it has been known that the inland form of *M. lamberti* differs in colour from typical specimens obtained near the eastern coast of Australia. More than a quarter of a century ago Dr. Ramsay pointed out that the New South Wales birds differed in the tint of colouring from those procured in South Australia.* Subsequently Mr. George Masters made reference to two specimens obtained by Mr. K. Broadbent at the Gulf of Carpentaria, and stated that it may prove to be a distinct species, but for the present (at that time) he looked upon it as a local variety of *M. lamberti*.† These differences in colour have recently been brought more prominently under my notice while working at the Maluri, and on comparing a series from widely separated parts of the continent. Adult males from the Gulf of Carpentaria, Western Queensland, Western New South Wales, North-Western Victoria, and the inland portions of South Australia, hitherto recognized under the name of *Malurus lamberti*, may at once be distinguished, when compared with typical examples of that species, in having the crown and sides of the head purplish-blue instead of deep cobalt ; moreover, the feathers round the eye and the ear-coverts are rich cobalt instead of turquoise-blue, and the mantle and upper portion of the back purplish-blue instead of cobalt-blue. In the colour of these parts the species here characterized by me under the name of *Malurus assimilis* more closely resembles *M. pulcherrimus*. Both Western Australian representatives of this section of the genus, however, *M. pulcherrimus* and *M. elegans*, are widely separated from *M. lamberti* and its allies in having the throat and upper portion of the breast dark blue instead of black.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WHITE-BELLIED THICK-HEAD (FEMALE).

BY ROBERT HALL.

THE distinguishing characters of the female of the White-bellied Thickhead, *Pachycephala lanioides*, Gould, have not, as far as I am aware, appeared in print, and as two skins of this bird have recently been received from Mr. J. P. Rogers, of Derby, North-west Australia, I take the opportunity of recording a description

* Proc. Zool. Soc. 1875, p. 589.

† Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W., vol. i., p. 53 (1876).



North, Alfred J. 1901. "Description of a new species of the genus *Malurus*." *The Victorian Naturalist* 18, 29–30.

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