

FURTHER NOTES ON BROWN
PLUMAGE IN AUSTRALIAN
CORVUS

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Some years ago the writer¹ discussed the occurrence of sporadic brown plumage in certain specimens of *Corvus* species, and ascribed the cause as due to wear and fading of the feathers, possibly accentuated in cases of delayed moult.

Another type of brown plumage occasionally found in birds of this genus is the result of a mutant gene producing rufous melanin (phaeo-melanin) granules instead of the normal black (eumelanin) granules. According to Rensch³ these two types of granulated melanins were first recognised as recently as 1923, by K. Gornitz.

North² records an Australian Raven (*C. coronoides*) in the Australian Museum which has "very pale brown plumage, and having all the feathers of the upper parts broadly tipped with white." An examination of several skins of brown mutants of the Australian Raven and the Little Crow (*C. bennetti*) in the South Australian Museum reveals the fact that there is a tendency for some areas of plumage to become fawn-coloured or even dirty white. The remiges and rectrices seem to be most prone to become fawn in colour in these brown mutants.

REFERENCES

- 1 Boehm, E. F., 1940. "S.A. Orn.," XV (7): 105-107.
- 2 North, A. J., 1901, "Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tas." I: 8.
- 3 Rensch, Bernhard, 1925, "Ibis," series-12, vol. I: 856.