

Order Passeriformes, Family Laniidae, Genus
Falcunculus.

Falcunculus frontatis flaviculus—Frontal Shrike-tit.

Description.—Upper surface—Forehead, crown of head, and back of neck, black; lores, white, bounded behind by a narrow black patch, extending from the back of the head. This is succeeded by a broad white patch extending backwards on

either side of the head to the hind neck. Back, olive green, somewhat brighter on the upper tail coverts. The feathers of the top of the head lengthened into an erectile crest.

Under surface.—Chin, throat, and upper breast, black, bounded on either side of the neck by a broad patch of white; rest of the under surface bright yellow.

Wing.—Primaries, secondaries, and wing coverts, dull black; all, except the first primary, narrowly edged with light grey. The outer webs of the secondaries washed with olive green.

Tail.—Two central feathers dark grey, the two outer feathers with the outer webs white, and the inner grey largely tipped with white, the rest with inner webs dull black, outer webs grey.

Legs and feet, dark brown; bill, black; iris, reddish brown.

Measurements.—Total length of skin, 165 m.m.; Wing, 82 m.m.; Bill, 16 m.m.

The female differs from the male in being slightly less in all measurements, in having the chin grey, and the throat and upper breast olive green, instead of black, and in having the bill dark brown colour, with lighter edges. The young resemble their parents from the nest.

Distribution.—All parts of South Australia in which Eucalypti are found, except Kangaroo Island and Eyre's Peninsula. It has been recorded from as far north as Moolooloo in the Flinders Ranges, and as far south as Penola. Nearly allied sub-species inhabit the whole of the eastern and northern parts of the Continent, Western Australia having a species of its own. No species occurs in Tasmania.

Habits.—This handsome bird is still commonly, though sparsely distributed throughout the Adelaide parks and gardens, though from its retiring habits it is not often recognised, but anyone familiar with its mournful whistle can find a pair in almost any part of the park lands. They are common in the hills about Blackwood and Belair, but less so in the higher more thickly timbered parts of the Ranges. They are very local birds and a pair once located can be found about the same situation year after year, and all the year round.

In the Autumn and winter each pair is generally accompanied by last season's brood, the latter being driven away at the approach of the next nesting season. They usually keep

to the middle and lower parts of the trees where loose pieces of bark may be found, underneath which they find their food. They can detach surprisingly large pieces of bark, and when at work on the trunk of a gum tree, a pair of these birds will make a considerable noise, when pulling off and dropping the pieces of bark for they move from one piece to another with great rapidity. If a piece of bark be hard to move, they give it a shake with the bill, and then listen for insect movement underneath it before pulling it off. They are pugnacious birds at nesting time, when they will drive any intruders out of their particular district.

Flight.—Rather slow and undulating, and never long continued.

Song.—A long drawn mournful whistle is the commonest. another note is a double whistle, the second being drawn out; and a third note is a triple sound, something between a whistle and a chatter, resembling the words *chet-a-chet* frequently repeated. The song is uttered all the year round, but is louder and more frequent in the breeding season.

Food.—Chiefly insects taken from beneath the bark of trees. They have been known occasionally to break open and eat soft shell almonds.

Nest.—The nest is one of the most difficult to find of all Australian birds, and when found is often inaccessible. The site most commonly chosen is an upright fork at the extreme top of an Eucalyptus sapling, at a height varying from 20 to 30 feet from the ground. The birds first nip off the small twigs about 5 or 6 inches above the selected site, and then score the bark of the inner surfaces of the twigs to which the nest is to be attached, right down to the wood; the edges of the wound in the bark soon curl outwards, and so afford a firmer hold for the nesting material. The nest is pear shaped, and is built of fine strips of bark bound together with cobweb, and outwardly decorated with the teased up silk of spiders' cocoons; it is lined with fine dried grasses. The upper edge of the nest is curved inwards to prevent the eggs being thrown out in a high wind, the nest has to be turned almost upside down before the eggs will roll out. Both sexes assist in building the nest. If the nest be taken, another is built within a fortnight, within a 100 yards of the first, but it is not certain whether two broods are reared in the season under normal conditions. Three eggs are almost invariably laid, very occasionally four.

Eggs.—Ground colour, white, sparingly marked with small roundish spots of black, dark brown and purplish grey, the latter being semi-submerged. The spots are more numerous at the larger end. A clutch of three eggs measured 1. 2.40 c.m. x 1.70 c.m. 2. 2.50 c.m. x 1.70 c.m. 3. 2.50 c.m. x 1.70 cm:
