

Tasmanian Notes.

—By Edwin Ashby, F.L.S., M.B.O.U.—

A few notes on the birds collected and observed on the occasion of a very brief visit to Tasmania in the last week in March this year, may be of interest to the readers of the "S.A. Ornithologist." An afternoon was spent in the somewhat low scrub on the opposite side of the Derwent to Hobart, and some miles up the river. The date was the 20th March; a flock of the little Black-headed Honey-eater (*Melithreptus affinis affinis* Len.) flew over our heads as we left the jetty, and settled in some low trees. Their note is low, but penetrating, and reminds one of the fami-

liar note of *M. brevirostris*. The first specimen shot was in immature plumage, the crown being brownish green, instead of the typical black. Next to the Melithreptus, the commonest bird in the patch of timber adjoining the river was the Tasmanian Yellow-throated Honey-eater (*Nesoptilotis flavigula Gould*) ; this handsome Honey-eater, with its grey-green to bright, yellowish-green plumage and brilliant yellow throat enlivens the bush with its constant loud calls.

One picks out notes that remind one of the White-eared Honey-eater, and also the loud whistle of the Singing Honey-eater, but in addition it has a repertoire all its own, full, rich, melodious notes, one series of which has been likened to the words "get over," repeated many times.

Another bird common in this scrub was the Tasmanian Crescent Honey-eater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera inornata Gould*) why *inornata* I cannot imagine. For a specimen shot later on South Bruny Island has a jet black crescent mark, delicate pencilling on the throat, and bright yellow on the wings, forming a combination as vivid and effective as the best specimen I have seen from the mainland.

A specimen of the charming Fire-tailed Finch (*Zonaeginthus bellus bellus Lath.*) was shot; its scarlet rump shone with intense lustre in the sunshine, and when handled, the delicate olive scalloped marked back, and grey scalloped marked underside, make it easily one of Tasmania's handsomest birds, and one of Australia's most charming finches. The next bird to be collected was the Dusky Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera albiscapa Gould*) ; many of these little "gnat catchers" were fitting about with ever restless movement, uttering their call—"chit chit." I think that completes the list of species collected in that spot, but Scarlet-breasted Robins were represented by several pairs; a large flight of Spine-tailed Swifts were hawking at a considerable height, and every now and again swooping down between the tree tops. I was intending to get a specimen, or rather, try to, after I had secured specimens of several of the smaller birds, but in half-an-hour's time all the Swifts had cleared out, and I saw no more of them during my stay in Tasmania. Musk Lorikeets and Tasmanian Minahs were busy in a neighbouring orchard.

A Tasmanian White-bearded Honey-eater (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae canescens Lath.*) was collected; it diverges somewhat from others I have collected in Tasmania; but I doubt, if a series of the insular birds were mixed up with the mainland ones, that they could be separated except by means of their labels.

From the 22nd to the 25th of the same month I was at Lunawanna, South Bruny Island; the weather was very wet and I had but little time to spare, apart from the strenuous marine work I was engaged in. I collected skins of the Whistling Shrike Thrush (*Colluricinclla harmonica strigata* Swainson); the rufus eyebrow and spangled breast are rather striking features, also as I have before noted its whistle is superior, and in some respects distinct, from the mainland birds. Also a Tasmanian Raven (*Corvus coronoides tasmanicus* Mat.) was shot, feeding on the flotsam of the beach. Certainly this bird has an exceptionally robust beak, as compared with the birds of the mainland.

The Brown Scrub-Wren (*Tasmanornis humilis* Gould) was noted; all the species of Honey-eaters heretofore noted as near Hobart were seen on the Island, with the addition of the Tasmanian Spine-bill, which was very numerous. Several of the Grey-tailed Thickhead (*Pachycephala pectoralis glaucura* Gould) were seen, but they were not in song. I was pleased to see the Tasmanian Wattle Bird (*Dyottornis paradoxus* Daudin) feeding on Honeysuckle (*Banksia*) blossoms.

The Pink-breasted Robin (*Erythrodryas rodinogaster* Drapiez) is found in the secluded fern gullies on the Island. What I take to be Swamp Quail (*Synoicus ypsilophorus*) is fairly numerous at Lunawanna, but all agreed that there were two forms, the smaller still numerous, and the "very much larger one", rarely, if ever, seen on the Island.

I am able to record, on what I consider quite reliable information, the fact that the Tasmanian Tawny-crowned Honey-eater (*Gliciphila melanops crassirostris* Mat.) has recently put in an appearance at Lunawanna. I knew it occurred, although rare, on the north-east coast of Tasmania, and a friend of mine took a clutch of eggs there, but this far southern locality is quite new to me.
