

36 Order Passeriformes, Family Meliphagidae, Genus Acanthagenys

Order Passeriformes, family Meliphagidae,
Genus Acanthagenys, Gould.

Acanthagenys rufogularis (Gould) Spiney-cheeked Honeyeater. Mr. Gregory M. Mathews has divided the species into four sub-species. There is no doubt the inland form is lighter in colouration than those, found near the coast.

Description—Feathers of the head short, very square at the ends, and of a light grey with a dark stripe down the centre; back of neck, back and mantle, dark brown, each feather margined with light grey; upper- tail coverts, inmost white with a dark brown stripe down the centre; primaries dark brown, narrowly edged with yellowish grey; secondaries almost black edged and tipped with white; a black line passing from the bill through the eye, to the ear coverts; bare space under the eye, pinkish flesh colour below which there is a tuft of white spines, part of these strange spines are tinged with bright yellow; base of bill, soft and fleshy and of a bright pink colour; tip of bill, black; throat, rufous, with a black line down each side; breast, yellowish broad stripe of dark brown down each feather, giving it a mottled appearance; tail, brown, tipped with white; under tail coverts, white with a long narrow strip of dark brown down the centre; iris, bluish; feet, greenish yellow.

Distribution —A wide distribution over the whole of the interior and from New South Wales across to Western Australia. It is really a dry country bird, but at times, it is found right on the seacoast, where the rainfall is heavy.

Habitat — Frequents all classes of country from the big gum country to the low bush on the seashore.

Habits — A strange bird darting about in a most erratic manner, and often seen hawking for insects in mid air.

Flight—Very, erratic, darting about from one side of a feeding tree to the other, and returning from whence it started

Note—A very strange guttural, gurgling, broken sound, with a short pause then continued.

Food—Consists of honey, insects, wild fruits, including, berries, and at times seeds.

Nesting season — Varies according to locality. Near the coastline they breed in October and November, in the interior almost at any time the rain falls, generally from July to December.

Nest—A, deep snug structure attached generally to a, horizontal fork or at the end of a branch amongst a thick mass of

leaves. A green strong rim of green plant tendrils, or rootlets is first fastened to both sides of the fork, the next tendril or rootlet is attached to both ends allowing it to drop down in the shape of a loop giving the depth of the nest, the same material is now worked in, crossing and recrossing till a strong framework is constructed; then a quantity of and snug nest.

A nest observed by Dr. A.M. Morgan at Robe, on October 20th, 1918, was built of green grasses and lined with clematis down, dandelion seeds and horsehair. It measured — Height overall, 65 c.m.; opening, 90 c.m. x 70 c.m.; depth of cavity, 60 c.m. It contained two partly incubated eggs.

Eggs Two or three in clutch, ground colour cream, scantily spotted with very dark brown, the spots being mostly arranged at the larger end as an irregular ring.

Measurement of Eggs — Average, 2.60 c.m. x 1.83 c.m.; largest egg, 2.85 c.m. x 1.90 c.m., smallest egg, 2.45 c.m. x 1.85 c.m.