

Melithreptus gularis loftyi—Southern Black-chinned Honey Eater.

BY S. A. WHITE.

This large melithreptus is a resident at the Reedbeds, where it breeds. Although they as a rule only call in the nesting season or about the time the early rains fall, still they are to be met with silently hunting amongst the gum tops at almost any time of the year. The call is a very loud one, and very distinctive of the species. It is a very pleasing one to me, because it is associated with my early childhood. When quite a child I remember my father telling me "to listen to the call of the melithreptus." The call is invariably made when upon the wing. As a rule these birds fly high and become very active, and calling loudly after rain. A small party of five or six will congregate in the top of a high gum, then fly high in the air, fluttering their wings and warbling together. At times they are almost all touching one another, some of them, presumably the males, calling loudly all the time. The nest is very difficult to find. It is generally

situated in the overhanging topmost branches of a very high gum, and strange to say the hair used in the construction of the nest is always white. I have repeatedly watched these birds procuring the material for their nests. They will fly on to a cow and cling to the belly or the sides (always on to a white patch) and pull vigorously at the coat till a bill full of white hair is secured, then they fly away with great speed, making it almost impossible to tell in which direction their nest is situated. Last nesting season a bird came into the stockyard two or three times within an hour and took hair from a black cow which had a white streak right under the belly, and to this white line the bird hung back downwards while it plucked out the white hairs. During the last nesting season these birds for the first time to my knowledge had the audacity to procure their nesting material from a partly white cat. They persecuted the cat so severely that it often cried out with rage, and may be pain.

They seem of a gregarious habit, and very often a party of eight or ten are seen moving from one treetop to another.*
