

Order Passeriformes, Family Meliphagidae,
Genus Meliornis.

Meliornis novae-hollandiae subassimilis.

Upper surface—Forehead, crown and occiput black, feathers at the base of the bill tipped with white, hind neck black, each feather with a margin of light brown, line over ear coverts white, ear coverts black, with a tuft of white feathers extending backwards from their lower posterior border, mantle black each feather broadly margined with white, on some of the feathers on one web only, feathers of the back and upper tail coverts black broadly margined with dull brown.

Lower surface—Chin black, bordered on each side at the angles of the mouth by a patch of white, throat black, with the hair-like terminations of the feathers white, feathers of the breast black, broadly margined with white, the border becoming broader and the central streak narrower towards the abdomen which is white, under tail coverts white, with a broad lanceolate streak of black in their centres, thighs brown.

Wing—Primaries and secondaries black, all except the first two primaries and the last secondary, with the outer webs margined with bright yellow forming a yellow patch on the wing, the last two secondaries margined with white at their tips, wing coverts black.

Tail—Two central tail feathers dull black, the outer webs washed with yellow, the rest of the tail feathers black, the outer webs margined with yellow, and largely tipped with white on the inner webs, the two outer ones with a small patch of white on the outer webs as well.

Bill—Black.

Legs and feet—Black.

Iris—White.

The female resembles the male, but is slightly smaller.

The young on leaving the nest resemble the adults.

The chick is hatched with the eyes closed, it is covered with a scanty dark brown down, and has the gape and bill bright yellow.

Average measurement of nine skins. Total length, 163 m.m., wing 77 m.m., bill 17 m.m.

Distribution—It is found in all the southern parts of S.A., and in Kangaroo Island, it does not inhabit the interior. Nearly allied sub-species are found in Victoria, N.S.W., Tasmania, and Western Australia.

Habits—They like country covered with small flowering shrubs, especially banksias, other favourite trees, are gum trees, wattle, heath (*Epacris*), and hakeas. They are familiar birds in all suburban flower gardens, often nesting there, if there be suitable cover. They are non migratory as a rule but sometimes appear for a time in a district and then leave it for a year or two. Generally they go singly or in pairs, unless a good feeding tree be found, when as many as 20 or 30 may be present at a time. They are pugnacious, and will tackle and drive off much larger birds than themselves from the nest, or feeding tree. If the old bird be discovered sitting on eggs, she leaves the nest silently and stealthily, but if the nest contain young, she remains close to and makes a great clatter.

Flight—Swift and somewhat erratic, as a rule limited to quick dashes from one feeding tree to another, but will sometimes chase an intruder for a long distance.

Song—A shrill "tweet," the alarm note is a harsh clatter.

Food—The nectar of flowers, and small insects, the latter often taken upon the wing.

Nest—The nest is built low down, rarely higher than six feet, in some thick bush, such as banksia, hakea, or Kangaroo thorn, in gardens they sometimes build in the fruit trees; the principal breeding season is from July to end of September, but odd nests may be found in any month of the year. They are occasionally the hosts of the pallid cuckoo.

The nest is constructed of fine dry twigs, rootlets or grasses, bound together with wool or cobwebs, occasionally it is unlined, but usually with fluffy seeds, sheep's wool, or rabbit fur, the unfertile seeds of the banksia are a favourite lining. The nest is paced in an upright fork, and not suspended by the rim. Two broods are hatched in the season. The young leave the nest when about three weeks old.

An average nest measured, height $2\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter x $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep.

Eggs—Ground colour creamy buff, with an irregular zone of diffuse reddish brown spots, intermingled with a few darker sharply defined ones. Average measurement of eight eggs, 1.98 c.m. x 1.54 c.m. Largest egg 2.15 c.m. x 1.55 c.m.
