

Gippsland Bird Notes.

—By Edwin Ashby, F.L.S., M.B.O.U.—

It was my privilege to spend a few days of the first week in April at Yinnar, Gippsland. Yinnar is just a hundred miles from Melbourne.

My last visit to that part of Australia was in the winter of 1886, or 34 years ago. Where previously was virgin forest, untouched by the presence of man, is now miles and miles of rung timber. The place I camped at in 1886 was nine miles beyond the next station (Boolara), in the "big timber country." Two birds I met with there appear absent at Yinnar; they are the Victorian Large-billed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis magnirostris howei* Mat.), which was there creeping about like a mouse, amongst the ferns of the creek bottom, and the Victorian Pink-breasted Robin (*Erythrodryas rodinogaster inexpecta* Mat.), which was then fairly numerous in a small piece of rung timber, only an acre or so in extent. The cock birds seemed to know their protective colouration, and would settle with their backs

towards me on the charred and blackened surfaces of fallen timber. I found it necessary to wait till they turned their conspicuous breast, before one could shoot them.

Now for the birds that are still around Yinnar. Of the parrots, the day before my arrival, the Victorian King Parrot (*Alisterus cyanopygius neglectus* Mat.) was seen near the homestead, but no further specimens put in an appearance during my stay. In the open valley bordering Middle Creek, Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*, S. & N.) were very numerous, but they were not seen back in the scrub, their place there being taken by the following species. The Crimson Parrot (*Platycercus elegans* Gmelin), while sometimes seen in small flocks in the timbered ranges, was in the forest more often seen in twos or threes, always highly coloured specimens, mostly males, sometimes females, which are a little less highly coloured. Not once did I see any highly coloured adults in the orchard, in the valley near the homestead, although large flocks of the young birds, green and red, were always to be found eating the fruit there. This seems to be the usual habit, for my friends thought that the highly coloured birds of the forest were a different species, because they did not mix with the green ones.

There were several Gang Gang Cockatoos (*Callocephalon galeatum* Lath.) feeding in the tops of the gums on the borders of the forest, their strange, murmuring notes guiding us to their position, and a very fine cock-bird was secured.

Along the banks of Middle Creek, under the shade of the willows, the Victorian Mountain Thrush (*Oreocincla lunulata jendyi* Mat.) was quite common; and a fine specimen was obtained. It is a little lighter than specimens from S.A., but differs very widely from the specimen I shot at Mallanganee, N.S.W., on 9th November, 1912, this latter evidently being (*O. heinei* Cabanis). My son, A. K. Ashby, who has just returned from the same locality, brings back a skin of the Victorian Spotted Ground-bird (*Cinlosoma punctatum neglectum* Mat.), which is rare in the locality, and was not seen by me. This specimen differs considerably from South Australian specimens in my selection, and needs further investigation.

Psephodes olivaceus scrymgeouri Mat. (Victorian Coach-whip Bird)—which, in the Yinnar district, is always known as "Stock-whip Bird;" is fairly common, but at this season of the year the birds hardly made a sound, except one very wet day, when they were making their astounding "crack" in fine style, we obtained a fine female; it is curious how often a female is shot when the huntsman is following the notes of a male.

The Green-rumped Shrike-Robin (*Eopsaltria australis viridior* Mat.) is fairly common in the tree-fern gullies, but also occurs in the open forest; several specimens were secured.

The White-throated Tree-creeper (*Climacteris leucophaea leucophaea* Lath.) was very busy everywhere, and was shot in the endeavour to find the rare Red Eye-browed Tree-creeper, which was collected in the same place by Mr. A. K. Ashby in the spring. It seems that they had quite left the locality, and must have visited the spot for breeding purposes.

The Victorian Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis longirostris longirostris*, Q. & G.) did not appear to be nearly as numerous as it is at Mount Dandenong, but this may have been due to the fact that the birds were not calling at this season of the year. The Victorian Blue-Wren was very common, and seemed a very robust type, one immature male being taken in mistake for a *Sericornis*.

The Grey Crow Shrike (*Strepera cuneicaudata* Vieill) was also obtained, and is referred to in following article.

The Victorian White-eared Honey-eater (*Nesoptilotis leucotis melanodera*, Q. & G.) was secured, but does not seem to be a common bird in this district.

Rhipidura flabellifera victoriae Mat. (Victorian Fantail)—was numerous. A specimen shot shows a great contrast to the Tasmanian form, the latter in every respect being very much darker.

The Victorian Brown-Tit (*Acanthiza pusilla macularia* Mat.) was everywhere busily gathering insects, without any apparent rest.
