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## ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES.

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### I.

The Short-billed Honey-eater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*, Vig. and Horsf.), although not so uniformly distributed in the neighbourhood of Sydney as the Lunulated Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunulatus*, Shaw), is fairly common in some localities. Except in the breeding season, it is usually met with in small flocks of about seven to twelve or more in number, and generally attracts one's attention by its peculiar grating or rasping notes as it passes from tree to tree.

During many years' observation I have noted a seasonal change in the colour of the bare space above and behind the eye. Adult specimens of both sexes obtained during July and August by the Curator, Mr. R. Etheridge, the Taxidermist, Mr. J. A. Thorpe, and myself, at Sutherland and Toongabbie, had the bill black, the legs and feet reddish-brown, the sides and soles of the feet ochreous yellow, and the bare space above and behind the eye pale greenish-blue. Adult examples obtained by me at Roseville from January to April inclusive, all had the bill, legs and feet of the same colour as specimens obtained in July and August, but the bare space above and behind the eye was dull yellow. The last example procured was an adult female, on the 7th January, 1904, shot together with a fledgeling Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*, Lath.), that had only then recently left the nest of the foster-parent, in a tree close to my house. These specimens have been mounted together and placed in the Exhibit Collection. A similar seasonal change occurs in the colour of the bare space around the eye of the adult male of the Fig-bird (*Sphecothebes maxillaris*, Lath.); this part in the winter being pale buffy-yellow, and in the breeding season a uniform rich red. The comb too of the Lotus-bird or Comb-crested Parra (*Hydratorator gallinaceus*, Temm.), Mr. G. Savidge informs me, in the autumn is yellow, but at the time of my visit to the Clarence River during the breeding season in November, all the birds I saw had the comb red.

## II.

Among several skins forming part of a collection made on Lord Howe Island and submitted to me for examination by Mr. J. B. Waterhouse, M.A., Head Master of the High School, Sydney, was a remarkably fine specimen of Latham's Snipe, (*Gallinago australis*, Lath.). It was obtained by Mr. Waterhouse's sons, during a stay on the island from August to October in 1903. This species breeds in Japan and winters in Australia and Tasmania; arriving in New South Wales, from which Lord Howe Island lies about four hundred miles due east, in the middle of August and departing again about the end of February or March. I can find no previous record of *Gallinago australis* being obtained on Lord Howe Island.

## III.

From Dr. P. Herbert Metcalfe, Resident Medical Officer at Norfolk Island, the Trustees have received from time to time the skins of avian visitors to that outlying insular dependency of New South Wales. Last mail brought a skin of the Silver-eye (*Zosterops lateralis*, Latham, = *Z. caerulescens*, of Gould's Handbook of Australian Birds), with which Dr. Metcalfe sent me the following note:—"I am sending you the skin of a small bird for identification. Large flocks of the same visited the Island this year. It is a species of *Zosterops*, but it is much smaller than either of our two found here, *Z. tenuirostris* and *Z. albigularis*. It is a curious fact that almost always when we saw a flock of the bird like that we sent, especially when on the grass, there was what we call here a Sparrow, *Symmorpus leucopygius*, Gould, in the middle of it."

Previously Dr. Metcalfe forwarded skins of two birds procured on the island. One was the Goldfinch (*Carduelis elegans*, Stephens), and the other an immature example of the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*, Linn.) Both of these European species are acclimatised in Australia, and are common in the neighbourhood of Sydney. From the unusual prolificness of the latter it is almost certain to prove a pest. The same day that five fledgelings left a nest built under the roof of my house, towards the end of October, 1904, the parents commenced to carry in fresh nesting material, and four weeks later I saw them taking in food and heard the noise of young ones.