

NOTES ON THE VARIED HONEY-EATER  
(*PTILOTIS VERSICOLOR*, GOULD.)

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*Ptilotis versicolor*, North, Vict. Nat., xxi., 1905, p. 167.

(Plate v., fig. 3.)

The Varied Honey-eater was described by Gould in 1842 from a single specimen contained in a collection of bird skins from Northern Australia, and was for many years regarded as a rare species. It is an inhabitant of the coastal districts and adjacent islands of Northern and North-eastern Queensland and Southern New Guinea, and is also found on some of the intermediate islands of Torres Strait. Off the coast of North-eastern Queensland, MacGillivray obtained this species on Dunk Island, and Elsey on Albany Island. Many specimens were procured by the "Chevert" Expedition, fitted out by the late Sir William Macleay, since when it has been obtained by various collectors both in New Guinea and Australia.

Among a small collection of bird skins sent me for examination, made by Mr. Albert F. Smith, principally near Cairns, North-eastern Queensland, and the neighbourhood, was a specimen of *Ptilotis versicolor*, Gould, collected by him on one of the Frankland Islands on the 16th October, 1904. Subsequently I received a second specimen from him, shot in company with the other, also their nest and a set of two eggs taken at the same time.

The nest of *Ptilotis versicolor*, as will be seen from the accompanying plate, is an open cup-shape, and somewhat scanty structure, daylight being visible through the greater portion of the sides. Externally it is formed of fibrous rootlets, held together with plant down and spider webs, with which are intermingled a few egg-bags of spiders and their green silky covering, the inside being sparingly lined with fine pale brown rootlets and fibre, and at the bottom with a small quantity of silky-white plant-down. It is attached by the rim on one side to a leafy horizontal branch from which springs a thin twig at right angles, but this is concealed in the structure, two leaves being worked on to the side of the nest. Externally it measures three inches and three-quarters in diameter by two inches and a quarter in depth, the inner cup measuring three inches in diameter by one inch and a half in depth.