



Upper : Pied Flycatcher (*Arses kaupi*)

Lower : Frill-necked Flycatcher (*Arses lorealis*)



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Notes on *Arses kaupi* and *Arses lorealis*

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Key to the Genus.—Total length less than 6.6 inches.

Colour, black and white with white ring around neck.

Key to the Species.—Lores and band on chest black. (*A. kaupi*.)

Lores chest and underparts white. (*A. lorealis*.)

Measurements in inches of typical specimens:—

A. kaupi:—Length 6, wing 3.20, tail 3, bill .4, tarsus .75.

A. lorealis.—Length 5, wing 3.15, tail 2.8, bill .43, tarsus .72.

The Pied Flycatcher (*Arses kaupi*) was first described by Gould in 1851. Although he assigned this bird to the genus *Arses*, he was very doubtful whether or not a new genus should have been created for it. Apparently his doubts were well founded for in the first place all females of the true *Arses* are brown in colour, whilst in the case of the Australian Pied Flycatcher both sexes are almost alike, and, further, as Mathews points out, the unproportionately long hind-toe and nail is an outstanding peculiarity, as is also "the enlargement of the eyelid into a narrow flat rim crenulated on its outer margin." In life this rim "which is one-twentieth of an inch in width and which encircles the whole eye, is a light indigo blue and gives the bird a very curious and remarkable appearance." These differences, important though they be, are hardly sufficient to warrant the creation of a new genus, firstly because colour is not regarded as a generic difference, and secondly the abnormal feet are not so important in themselves that they outweigh all other points of similarity between this unique bird and the other four species of *Arses* found in New Guinea and Papua. Since the publication of Mathews's notes on this bird in his monumental work, *The Birds of Australia*, very little appears to have been written concerning it.

The size and shape of the feet so much resembles those

of the genus *Climacteris* that it is not at all surprising to learn that this Flycatcher searches for its food in the crevices in tree trunks and under small pieces of bark in much the same manner as a Tree-creeper, its long claws and well-developed hind toe being well adapted for the purpose. According to the late A. J. Campbell, its movements are graceful, and the white frill which is erected at will imparts a singular appearance to the bird and serves at once to arrest the attention of the observer.

A. kaupi is by far the most common of the three pied Flycatchers confined to the coastal strip of east Queensland. It is essentially a bird of the dense scrubs, and its habitat extends from Cape York in the north to a point a little south of Townsville. Forty-three years elapsed between the description of the bird by Gould and the finding of the first recorded nest and eggs by Robert Hislop near the Bloomfield River on December 3, 1894. The eggs, two in number, were pinkish-white in colour, speckled with rufous and purplish spots measuring .81 inch by .58 inch.

Three months after this discovery Mr. Kendall Broadbent secured the type of *A. lorealis*, the Frilled Flycatcher. It is most interesting to note in passing that there are three skins in the collection of the National Museum, Melbourne, labelled "*Arses lorealis*, J. Cockerell, Brisbane, 1873." Although Brisbane is not accepted as the locality in which the specimens were collected, the date is correct, so that the particular specimens were in existence 22 years before De Vis published his description. There is also a specimen in the Macleay Museum, Sydney, labelled "Cape York, 1875." It is almost incredible that specimens should remain unnoticed so long before the type was described.

On December 12, 1896, H. G. Barnard secured the first nest and eggs of this species at Somerset, Cape York. The eggs closely resemble those of the Pied Flycatcher and measure in inches .77 by .56.

The Frilled Flycatcher is a comparatively rare bird and is confined to a very restricted habitat in the northern corner of Cape York. It is extremely doubtful if it is found south of the Claudie River where Dr. MacGillivray found it in fair numbers in 1917. Although Mr. McLennan and other eminent ornithologists have worked the country thoroughly from Coen and the Claudie as far south as Cairns, there appear to be no records whatever of this bird occurring in those districts.