



THE YELLOW-BREASTED BUSH-CHAT.

Ephthianura crocea.

The Emu

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"Birds of a feather."

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[PART 2.]

The Yellow-breasted Bush-Chat (*Ephthianura crocea*).

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THIS rarely-seen and extremely beautiful little species was discovered by Mr. T. A. Gulliver, of Townsville, when he was in charge of the telegraph station at Normanton, in the Gulf of Carpentaria district, and was described by Count F. de Castelnau and Dr. E. P. Ramsay in the *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.* in 1876 (vol. i., p. 380).

The original of the illustration (Plate XI.) was taken by Mr. Chas. A. Barnard and Trooper F. L. Berney, Ms.R.A.O.U., last March, at Torilla, about 90 miles from Rockhampton, Queensland.

As the late Mr. A. J. North has pointed out ("Nests and Eggs," vol. i., p. 352), *Ephthianura crocea* differs from *E. aurifrons* in its smaller size and brighter-coloured under surface, while the male adult of the former has the chin and throat rich yellow, and has a conspicuous crescentic black mark on the fore-neck.

Mr. North has taken his carefully-worded descriptions of both sexes of *Ephthianura crocea* from skins obtained near Derby, North-West Australia, which variety Mr. Gregory M. Mathews, F.R.S.E., desires us to differentiate by the trinomial appellation, *Aurephthianura crocea tunneyi* (see "List of the Birds of Australia," 1913, page 208).

Regarding the bird's habits, Mr. G. A. Kwartland, in a communication to Mr. North, states:—"Whilst camped beside a lagoon, about four miles from the Fitzroy River, North-Western Australia, and nearly opposite Noonkoombah Station, I saw a great many examples of *Ephthianura crocea*. Their yellow

plumage and black band at once attracted attention, but the mode of life was very different from that of *E. aurifrons*. Whilst the latter delights in searching for its insect food amongst salt-bush, or on the ground, *E. crocea* is more at home in the branches of trees about 15 or 20 feet high, where it hops about searching for insects, either in the bark or on the foliage. Occasionally the birds may be seen on the ground. They do not appear to associate in flocks, like any of the other species of the genus, but each works on its own account. Their nests are built in the usual cup-shaped form, and the one from which my set of eggs was taken was placed in a thistle about four feet high." On the other hand, the late Mr. Price Fletcher ("Bush Naturalist") stated that in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Carpentaria he usually observed these birds frequenting marshy and long grassy swamps instead of the dry plains, as do the other *Ephthianuras* or Bush-Chats.

The range of *Ephthianura crocea*, at present known, is North-West Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland.

Traffic in Wild Birds' Feathers.—Notwithstanding that feathers and down are prohibited articles, at present, in the United Kingdom, quantities of wild birds' plumages are still arriving there, and, it is stated, chiefly through enemy-alien agents in British oversea dominions. If this be true, it is scandalous. The ever-watchful and indefatigable Mr. James Buckland has addressed a circular letter on the subject to members of Parliament and to the leading newspapers in the United Kingdom. The following strong reference to the matter appeared in *The Humanitarian* for May last :—"It is a matter for great satisfaction that among the articles of which the importation was forbidden (under an order issued on 23rd February, 1917) are included 'ornamental feathers and down.' It is sincerely to be hoped that this prohibition will not be removed when the war is over. The importation of hundreds of thousands of pounds weight of wild birds' feathers annually, at a time when there is a shortage of food, has long been a public scandal of the first magnitude; the more so as this trade in the plumage—that is, in the destruction of birds—is in every way cruel and wasteful. It is to Mr. James Buckland, whose unceasing labours in this matter are well known, that the thanks of all humanitarians and lovers of bird-life are primarily due for the suspension of this hideous traffic."