



Gascoyne Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina gascoynensis*) Ashby, male

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[PART 1

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I suggest, as above, the use of Gascoyne Cuckoo-Shrike as the vernacular name of this bird. The R.A.O.U. Official Check-List of Australian Birds recognises five species of *Coracina* in Australia, which are as follows:—The Barred Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. lineata*), confined to New South Wales and Queensland and very distinct in its beautiful barring of the underside; the Papuan Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. papuensis*), recorded by Mathews from North Queensland; the Little Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. robusta*), with a range extending from South Queensland to South Australia; the White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. hypoleuca*), confined to Northern Tropical Australia, and the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. novæ-hollandiæ*), whose range extends almost throughout the whole of the Australian continent and Tasmania. G. H. Wilkins, now Sir Hubert Wilkins, recorded a new species of Cuckoo-Shrike from North Queensland, but I have seen no description, and a gentleman who had seen the skin informed me that it was distinct from the Gascoyne Cuckoo-Shrike.

The Gascoyne Cuckoo-Shrike holds much the same relationship to the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike as does the White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike towards the Little Cuckoo-Shrike, although the distinction is still more marked in the case of the Gascoyne bird. The Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike is very variable in the extent of the black of head and neck. In juvenile birds this is a mere broad black streak from lores to ear coverts inclusive, whereas in the adult stage the black extends over the whole of the face, chin and

neck, and there is also a broad band over the beak joining the eyes. But in the flock of the Gascoyne bird from which the type skin was secured, no birds were noticed with the black on the lower-face and throat, and the skin made has every appearance of being that of an adult bird.

Under the heading "Comparisons," the writer in the type description wrote as follows:—"This differs from all the other Australian species in the much paler upper plumage, which is about the same shade of grey as the Ground Cuckoo-Shrike (*Pterodocys maxima*); the underside is even whiter than the White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. hypoleuca*); no black extends below the face as in the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (*C. novæ-hollandiæ*); it differs from *C. hypoleuca* in being much larger, having dark ear-coverts and in that the dark feathers do not join across the beak. In my skins of *C. hypoleuca* the dark colour of the lores narrowly joins across the middle line. These differences equally apply to *C. robusta*."

The type of the Gascoyne Cuckoo-Shrike was shot by the writer on a tributary of the Gascoyne River, Western Australia, at sun-rise on October 2, 1927, out of a considerable flock, the birds of which in the horizontal rays of the then rising sun appeared quite white, and were uttering loud unfamiliar cries. During the following fortnight Dr. A. Chenery had the opportunity of observing a similar bird on the Gascoyne River, which he recorded in the *South Australian Ornithologist* under the name *C. hypoleuca*.

Mr. H. Collins, R.A.O.U., under date January 22, 1930, writing to me, says:—"I note what you say in last *Emu* re the light form of Cuckoo-Shrike: I noticed this bird on the Mullagine River and also on the Little De Grey, W.A., in 1923; they were breeding on the Mullagine near Bonnie Downs Station and feeding on 'Cajibuts' on the De Grey. I did not shoot any specimens, but mentioned to several of my friends, when I came home, that I had seen what I termed a pale form of the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike; the call and colour are both quite distinct from the former bird. I have no doubt that this is the same bird that you took when in W.A. last year."

ADDENDA to type description of *Coracina gascoynensis*, Ashby, *The Emu*, of January, 1930, Vol. XXIX., p. 191. The following data was accidentally omitted by the author. Holotype ♂; non-breeding; total length dry skin, 32 cm.; wing, 17 cm.; tail, 15 cm.; culmen, 25 mm.; tarsus, 35 mm.; iris almost black with narrow brown outer ring; feet, tarsus and bill black.