

slowly, but surely, to the mass of willow leaves and stems. Here it struggled through, and instead of hiding, made on out into open water and eventually reached another willow and disappeared amongst the leaves on the water's edge.

The third bird I caught with the camera before it also took the plunge, and slowly dog paddled its way after the other. No sight of either of the parents was had.

The birds must have hatched a day or so after I took the first pictures, for they were very nearly full grown and had advanced feathers, though I doubt if they would be ready to fly. The neck was mottled, and the rest of the plumage was a brownish colour, lacking the dark plumage of the back and back of the head so prominent on the adult birds. At no time did they utter a sound, but depended on their protective coloration and immobility to deceive me.

## **Straited Field-Wren near Milton, N.S.W.**

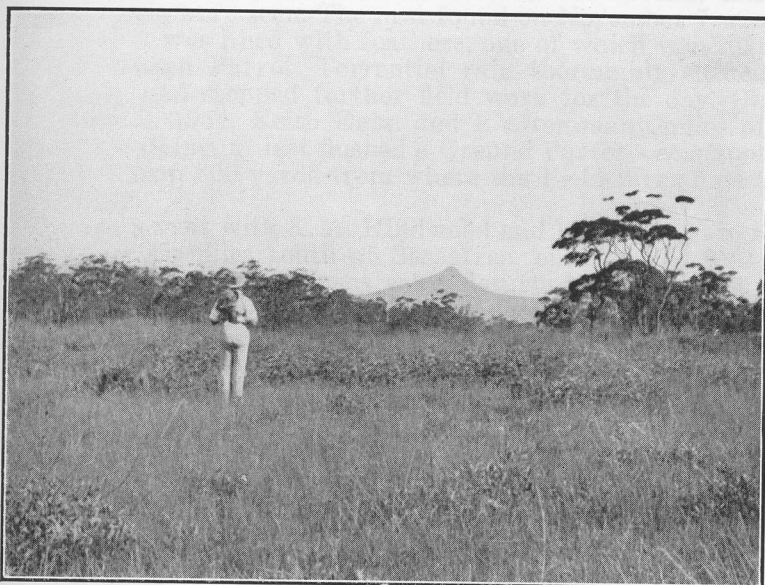
By C. P. HUMPHRIES, Ulladulla, N.S.W.

In June 1953, I decided to investigate the country lying west of Conjola, some 12 miles north of Milton on the Prince's Highway, south-eastern New South Wales. Here a bush road leads to a forestry look-out tower from which, on a clear day, splendid views may be had of the coast, and of the rugged country north, south and west, up to 30 miles distant. At the top of the range, which is generally about 1,600 feet above sea level, the heavily-timbered slopes and gorges give way to patches of forest and a lighter growth of rather stunted, wind-blown trees, heathlands, and extensive areas of a swampy nature, often referred to as 'button-grass plains'. The road continues through similar mixed country until it reaches the Tomerong-Nerriga road, a total distance of about 13 miles.

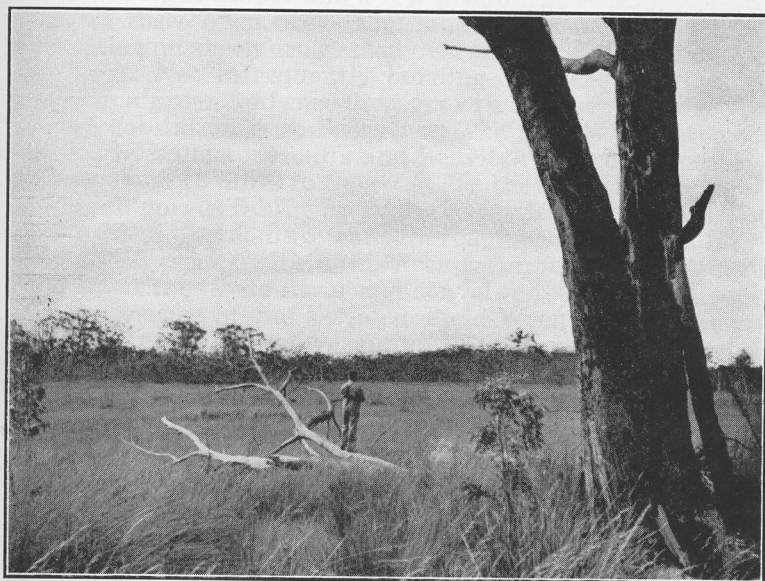
My first impressions of the open swampy areas were that here I might find a bird I had long wished to observe, namely the Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*). I did see the bird eventually, but not on that particular trip. I had not walked far from the car, when a small bird flew from the grass to the top of a low shrub. It was 'new' to me and on checking my description—pronounced striations on a base of greenish-yellow—against available literature on my return home I realized that it was a Striated Field-Wren (*Calamanthus fuliginosus*).

Subsequently several visits were made to the locality and also to the country lying to the west, towards the headwaters of the Clyde River. On one occasion some fourteen birds were seen in the space of a couple of hours. On November 7, 1953, when in company with W. Lane of Sydney, we found a well-concealed nest, containing three eggs, in thick grass at the base of a small bush.

Later, on January 1, 1954, a party comprising K. A. Hindwood, W. Lane, Ellis McNamara, Keith Egan, my son Keith,



Northern extremity of known range of Striated Field-Wren.  
Pigeon House Mountain in the background



Country at Tianjara, 25 miles north-west of Ulladulla  
Photos. by K. A. Hindwood.

and myself, visited the area to observe the species, and several birds were seen. The nest found on November 7 was collected; it was lined with feathers, one of which was that of the Ground Parrot. Torrential rain thoroughly soaked our party and stopped further field work for the day. On February 7, 1954, Keith Egan and I, after many miles of arduous walking, at last flushed a Ground Parrot—at a spot not more than 300 yards from where the Field-Wren's nest was found.

During a visit with K. A. Hindwood and Keith Egan, to a spot some 11 miles south of Sassafras, on May 16, 1954, several Striated Field-Wrens were disturbed from near the rough bush road that leads to a timber mill. This locality is only a few miles west from where the species was first observed by me.

The known distribution of the species to the west of Milton embraces an area roughly 12 miles in length by about 8 miles in width, on the table-land of the Currockbilly Range, extending from a point several miles north of the Pigeon House Mountain in the south to a point on the northern side of the Tomerong-Nerriga road at Tianjara Crossing where recently (October 13, 1954) I saw several birds. As a similar patch of country occurs some 8 miles to the north again, it is almost certain that the species will also be found there.

Within the limits defined there are extensive swampy uplands of tussock-grass and low shrubs, interspersed with patches of light timber and a few prominent rocky outcrops. Many of these open areas are hundreds of acres in extent and cattle and sheep are grazed over them for a short period each year. Not infrequently burning-off takes place so as to obtain a green and succulent growth for the animals. The nearest habitation is at Sassafras. The area is bordered on the east by sandstone cliffs and heavily-timbered slopes extending some 10 miles to the coast. To the south it is fringed by rugged gorges falling away to the Clyde River, and to the west by less forbidding, though rough, timbered country. The several creeks within this area form, for the most part, the head of the Clyde River and converge into a deep chasm.

The presence of the Striated Field-Wren to the west of Milton extends its known range approximately 150 miles northwards. The species was first recorded from New South Wales in 1897 (A. J. North, *Records Australian Museum*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1897, p. 14) from a specimen killed with a stone, in August 1896, near Buckley's Crossing (Dalgety), some 30 miles south-west of Cooma and close to the Victorian border. Fifteen years ago Norman Favaloro recorded (*The Emu*, vol. 40, 1940, pp. 92-3) seeing numbers of Striated Field-Wrens in the heathy country between Womboyne Inlet and Green Cape, a little to the north of Cape Howe. A nest lined with feathers of the Ground Parrot and containing two eggs was found by Mr. Favaloro.