

The Emu

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"Birds of a feather."

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[PART 3.]

Malurus dulcis (Lavender-flanked Wren), sp. nov.

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(Plate B.)

THIS pretty little species was described from a pair of specimens in the Tring Museum, and I am indebted to the Hon. Walter Rothschild for permission to name it.

Six males and four females were procured by Mr. J. T. Tunney in the granite ranges 10 miles east of South Alligator River, in July and August, 1903 (*cf.* Hartert, Nov. Zool., xii., p. 223, 1905). Dr. Hartert identified the species as *M. pulcherrimus*, Gould, but a further examination showed that the Alligator River specimens are different from the true *M. pulcherrimus*, and Dr. Hartert agrees that they must be kept distinct. The latter species has a decided tinge of blue on the throat, but *M. dulcis*, like *M. assimilis* and *M. lamberti*, has a black throat. The principal character for the separation of *M. dulcis* consists in the colour of the flanks, which are lavender-blue, not white as in *M. assimilis*, nor sandy-buff as in *M. lamberti*.

The following is a detailed description of the types of *Malurus dulcis*:—

Adult Male.—South Alligator River, Arnheim Land, 9th August, 1902 (J. T. Tunney; Rothschild Museum, No. 1,564). Upper surface particoloured. Crown of head shining purplish-blue, lighter, somewhat verging to deep cobalt, on the forehead; feathers round the eye and a patch of pointed plumes traversing the ear coverts enamelled cobalt; lores, cheeks, sides of face, and sides of neck black, extending in a broad band round the hind-neck, this band being followed by a band of lilac-blue; centre of the back lilac-blue, of about the same tint as the band above, but a little brighter and with white bases to some of the feathers and black tips to those which adjoin the black lower back; scapulars forming a patch of maroon-chestnut on each side of the blue dorsal patch and continued forward and downward to meet the breast-patch; lower back, rump, and upper tail coverts velvety-black; wing coverts and quills brown, with a slight shade of blue on the outer edges of the feathers; lesser coverts at bend of wing dark bluish-grey; tail feathers dark blue,

tipped more or less plainly with white, which extends along the outer web of the outermost feathers; throat, chest, and upper breast black, with a patch of lilac-blue on each side of the latter; lower breast and abdomen white, the sides of the body and flanks washed with pale lilac-blue or lavender; thighs white, with indistinct dusky bars; under tail coverts white, washed with lavender-blue; under wing coverts white; quills dusky brown below, ashy along the edges of the inner webs. Bill black; legs and feet dark brown. Total length, about 5.2 inches; culmen, 0.5 inch; wing, 1.9 inches; tail, 2.3 inches; tarsus, 0.85 inch.

Adult Female.—Ranges 10 miles east of South Alligator River, 4th July, 1903 (J. T. Tunney; Rothschild Museum, No. 1,286). Entirely different from the male. Bluish-grey above, from the forehead to the upper tail coverts; wing coverts brown, externally bluish-grey, a little darker than the back; quills dusky-brown, with lighter brown edges; tail feathers dark blue; lores and feathers round the eye white; ear coverts, sides of face, and sides of neck bluish-grey; cheeks and throat white; fore-neck, chest, and remainder of under surface pale buff, the sides of the upper breast light slaty-grey; the thighs rather deeper fawn-colour, as are also the under wing coverts; quills dusky below, a little more ashy on the inner webs. Bill reddish; eye brown; legs brown. Total length, 5.2 inches; culmen, 0.55 inch; wing, 1.85 inches; tail, 2.5 inches; tarsus, 0.8 inch.

The female, as I have remarked in my original paper (Bull. B.O.C., xxi., p. 100), is different from that of any other known species of *Malurus*, being of a bluish-grey colour above. The species is altogether a very remarkable one, and I have had much pleasure in having the coloured plate done for *The Emu*.

NOTE.—On looking at the skin, I think the scapulars could be raised by the male under excitement, such as displaying during the breeding season. Has anyone ever noticed this in any species of *Malurus*?—G. M. M.

Thermometer-Bird or Mallee-Fowl (*Lipoa ocellata*).

BY A. H. E. MATTINGLEY, C.M.Z.S.

PART II.

EGGS.—The *Lipoa* does not start to breed until two years old, and the first clutch of eggs laid is notably smaller in size than those laid by aged birds. It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty what is the precise interval between the laying of each egg, since in some mounds observations made show that an egg was laid every fourth day, in others every fifth day, whilst