

Australian Bight at some seasons and have undoubtedly been recorded by many observers there in error as *P. palpebrata*." Ornithologists who have made such identifications are E. W. Ferguson, W. MacGillivray and W. B. Alexander (see *The Emu*, 20, 1920, 72). On their authority the species has been given a place in the R.A.O.U. *Checklist*, 2nd edition, but in view of Falla's observations I would recommend that it be excluded from future lists. The species is a denizen of higher latitudes than *P. fusca*, being characteristic of the Antarctic zone, *P. fusca* replacing it in the sub-Antarctic.

Notes on the Broad-tailed Thornbill

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The Broad-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza apicalis*) is one of the common birds of the coastal lowlands, frequenting the thickets of *Melaleuca*, *Acacia*, and peppermint. It prefers swampy localities and seldom ranges far into the banksia and marri gum forests. The birds feed mainly among the foliage and bark of the trees and bushes, and seldom on the ground. Insects are often taken on the wing. The erect wren-like carriage of the tail is a characteristic feature of the bird in the field. The following are notes made in the Vasse River area, Busselton, Western Australia.

The breeding season extends over the months of August, September, October and November, the earliest record of a nest with eggs being August 28, 1935, and the latest—a nest containing an almost fully-fledged young Golden Bronze-Cuckoo (*Lamprococcyx plagosus*)—November 7, 1942. Nesting situations vary a great deal—for example, one of our notes reads: "Oct. 22, 1933, a nest containing two eggs, situated in a peppermint tree, 30 feet above the ground"—although from two to five feet seems to be the usual height. Frequently a site overhanging water is selected.

In *Melaleuca* thickets, shreds of paper-bark often form the basis of the nesting material, supplemented by dried grasses, and lined with feathers and scraps of wool. Characteristic nests are notable for the presence of the egg sacs of spiders. The normal clutch constitutes two or three eggs. *Acanthiza apicalis* is commonly used by the Golden Bronze-Cuckoo as a foster parent, but a note taken on September 4, 1933, records a nest containing two eggs of *apicalis*, and one of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), located in a *Melaleuca* thicket.

Here are some extracts from field notes:

Oct. 14, 1935. This nest was built in a Victorian tea-tree hedge. The first egg appeared on the 10th, the second on the 11th, and the third on the 13th.

Oct. 28, 1942. The nest was constructed in a banksia tree, bordering a swampy locality. It was empty at 8 o'clock, but when examined at the same time on the 30th was found to contain two eggs. Two birds, one of which flushed from the nest, were present. The nest was examined thereafter daily, at 8 o'clock, and on the 16th Nov. it contained one egg, and one chick. On the 18th, there were two young in the nest.

The photograph illustrates well a characteristic of the Western Australian birds—the upward tilt or cocking of the tail. It is inferred that the habit is not shared by other members of the Brown Thornbill series. It has been mentioned in the literature.

John Gilbert first remarked on the habit, when collecting for Gould, who wrote in his *Handbook* (vol. I, p. 368): "Like the other members of the genus, it is active and sprightly in its actions, leaping about from branch to branch with its tail erect." No hint is given that this habit is peculiar to the western birds, and in fact Gould mentioned it as a characteristic of the bird he called *Acanthiza pyrrhopygia* (*hamiltoni* of the *Checklist*), in South Australia—"an alert and quick little bird, carrying its tail above the level of the back." Apparently neither George Masters nor A. J. Campbell noticed any difference between the western and eastern birds, or if they did, omitted to refer to it in their writings. The next observer to refer to the habit was A. Milligan (*Western Australian Year Book*, 1900-01, vol. I, 1902, p. 240), who stated that "It is a ludicrous sight to see one of these vivacious birds seek a point of vantage in the scrubs and, elevating its tail in an upright manner, whistle with all its vocal might." Edwin Ashby (*Emu*, vol. 20, 1921, p. 134) was so impressed with the western bird's bearing that he regarded it as supporting evidence for considering *apicalis* a separate species. He wrote: "It carries its tail distinctly elevated—not erect, or even at an angle of 45 degrees, but still with a distinct elevation, so different from *A. pusilla*." See also Ashby and Le Souef (*Emu*, vol. 27, 1928, p. 268). Observations by ornithologists who are familiar with the various populations of the *pusilla* complex throughout Australia would be of value on this point.

Dr. D. L. Serventy has informed us that he has seen the tail-cocking habit among all the three races of this bird recognized in south-western Australia. It is frequently seen in the birds around Perth (*apicalis*); and he has noticed it in the birds from the extreme south coast, which would belong to the race *leeuwinensis* (a specific locality: Point D'Entrecasteaux), and also among the inland birds belonging to the race *whitlocki* (near Widgiemooltha).

As recent eastern States observers do not mention the habit for any of the members of the allied eastern Brown Thornbill, *Acanthiza pusilla*, it is of interest to quote the

following from Dr. Serventy's field notes—December 31, 1942 (Devil's Hole, Katoomba, N.S.W.): "The Brown Thornbill here carried its tail elevated so much that Gregory called out that it was a Blue Wren, mentioning the tail. I was at first inclined to think so too, till I put the glasses on it." March 11, 1943 (Fraser Island, Queensland): "At Ungowa . . . several Brown Thornbills, some of which held their tails cocked." Dr. Serventy agrees, however, that the habit is far more evident among birds in Western Australia than in the east.

Obituary

ROBERT WILLIAM LEGGE

With the death of Robert William Legge, of Cullenswood, Tasmania has lost one of its outstanding birdmen. His name, familiar to readers of *The Emu*, will be associated in their minds with that of his father, Colonel W. Vincent Legge. The latter was through his long life passionately attached to the study of ornithology and it was while serving with his regiment at Trincomalee that he wrote his splendid treatise on *The Birds of Ceylon* (1880). It was here, too, that his son Robert was born, on December 16, 1874. Later, when his father needed his help at Cullenswood, Colonel Legge sent in his papers, and returned to Tasmania. When matters had been adjusted he accepted the appointment of Commandant of the Tasmanian military forces, a post he held for many years. His writings on the physiography of the island, especially of the Lake St. Clair and Ben Lomond areas, are authoritative, and his continued interest in ornithology was shown by a foundation membership of the R.A.O.U.

On the death of the Colonel in 1918, R. W. Legge took over 'Cullenswood,' the family estate, selected by his grandfather about 1830, and now passing to his son Arthur. Needless to say he continued in the membership of the R.A.O.U. Educated at the Hutchins School, Legge has told me that the greatest pleasures of his school life were the days spent on Mount Wellington and on holidays with such friends as the Kermodes on their estate of Mona Vale. It was on such occasions that his love of nature in its many aspects established itself. Destined for his father's regiment, he went to England in the 'eighties to sit for the entrance examinations for the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. The entries, however, were many and vacancies few, and, although he passed high in the list, he was not selected. So after experience on pastoral properties in the Riverina, he returned to Tasmania to manage 'Cullenswood.' Riding along his runs and by the Break o' Day