

The new bird, however, may be known on the Vernacular List as the Darker Turquoise Wren.

Description of the male of *Malurus whitei*:—Crown of head, mantle, breast or abdomen, and upper and lower tail coverts bright metallic blue, nearest shade turquoise; chin and throat rich cobalt or "new" blue; ear coverts light turquoise blue; lores, back of neck, band across breast, and lower back velvety black; wings brownish, with external margins of feathers bluish-green; tail also bluish-green, some of the feathers being tipped with dull white; irides, bill, and tarsi dark. Dimensions in inches: Length, 5; culmen, 0.3; wing, 1.95; tail, 2.1; tarsus, 1.

It will be obvious that *M. whitei*, with its head and mantle turquoise blue and ear coverts light turquoise blue, differs on the one hand from *M. melanotus*, which has head and mantle brilliant ultramarine and ear coverts light blue; and, on the other hand, from *M. callainus*, which has head and mantle light turquoise blue and ear coverts silvery turquoise, almost white.

Geographically *M. whitei* also appears intermediate between *M. melanotus* and *M. callainus*. *M. melanotus* is found in the Lower Murray district and parts adjacent thereto, *M. whitei* in the interior, and *M. callainus* in the interior also, with a leaning towards the west, if an example in the National Museum, Melbourne, be correctly located.

Description of a New Bristle Bird (*Sphenura*).

BY ALEX. WM. MILLIGAN, PERTH.

THE discovery of a new species of *Sphenura* was made by me on the 12th October last in the dwarf coastal shrubs at Ellensbrook, in the south-west division of this State, about midway between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, whither I had gone in the hope of obtaining specimens of *Atrichia clamosa*.

The new bird closely resembles *Sphenura broadbenti*, and at first sight I thought that it was that form, or a western variety of it, but after examination of a skin of the eastern form belonging to the Geelong Museum, and kindly lent by Mr. W. Mulder, I felt that I need not have the slightest hesitation in separating it from that species.

The chief differences between the species are that the new one is much smaller than *Sphenura broadbenti*, and that in the former the rufous or chestnut head is brighter, and the under surfaces lighter than in the latter, and that the yellow gape and triangular loreal spot present in *Sphenura broadbenti* is absent in the latter.

The bird has two distinct calls—alarm notes and song notes. The former it utters when closely pursued and pressed, and resembles the words "pink, pink, pink." The latter is a series of clear, liquid, thrush-like notes.

The bird was most difficult to flush or even see, and it was

only in the afternoon of the second day's pursuit that I obtained a momentary glimpse of it as it rushed across a kwagga (species of Wallaby) track in the scrub with tail elevated. My next sight of it was on the fourth day of pursuit, just prior to shooting it, when my old Quail bitch disturbed it. Its motion on this occasion (perhaps due to its being severely pressed) was distinctly different from that observed on the former. Appearing, as it did, running at top speed across one of those beautifully rounded sand hills (which abound on the coasts), with its tail depressed below the plane of the body, and its dwarf rounded wings used as an aid to its running, its toes just touching the ground, and its neck stretched to the utmost, the bird reminded me very much of the action of the Lyre Bird in similar circumstances.

The food of the bird, as revealed by dissection, consisted wholly of land snails, those marine-like looking forms which are found in abundance on the coastal limestone hills, apparently lifeless in hot weather, but full of vitality after a shower of rain. One snail, with the shell perfect, was found in the stomach.

The bird was an adult female, but there was nothing to indicate that incubation was near.

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION.

Upper Surface.—Head and ear coverts bright chestnut, with a narrow whitish zone round the eye. Upper portion of hind neck showing faint chestnut, with round, blackish edgings to feathers. Mantle dark slaty-brown, faintly tinged with rufous and with dappling formed by ashy-grey margins to feathers. Wings, rump, and tail chestnut-brown; shaft of tail feathers black.

Under Surface.—Chin and throat white, with numerous darkish markings on outer margins, giving a dappled-grey appearance. Breast—much darker dapples, with greyish outer margins, the difference in the colouration between the throat and breast and the dark markings of the feathers of the latter forming a divisional and crescentic line between these parts, the same line being also faintly discernible around the whole of the hind neck.

Abdomen.—Dapplings less distinct and irregular, flanks dark slate-brown.

Under Tail Coverts.—Reddish-brown, long, and feathers loose in texture.

Mandibles.—Shining dark brown, approaching blackness, except the lower one, which is much lighter towards gape, but not yellowish.

Legs and Feet.—Dark brown.

Irides.—Red.

Wings.—Very rounded, the first quill very short, the sixth and seventh terminating equally, being the longest. Feathers, on back flanks and under tail coverts, loose and coarse. The

tail feathers set in pairs, the upper pair being the longest, and gradating to the under pair, which is the shortest.

I have given the new bird the specific name of *litoralis*, and the vernacular name of "The Lesser Rufous Bristle Bird."

For comparison I append the following measurements:—

	Total length.	Wing.	Tail.	Tarsus.	Culmen.
<i>Sphenura broadbenti</i>	10.5	3.7	5	1.4	.7
<i>Sphenura litoralis</i>	9	3.4	4.5	1.2	.6

Should Mutton Birds be Protected?

MUTTON-BIRDING (according to the species of Petrel) has almost become a national affair in some parts of New Zealand, in Southern Australia, notably on islands in Bass Strait (where alone it is reckoned that the number of young birds taken for food amounts annually to about 600,000), and on certain islets off South-Western Australia. In the interests of these sea-fowl, should they be protected?

Regarding Victoria the question has been brought somewhat prominently under notice lately by a sensational letter from Mr. Charles French, jun., Assistant Government Entomologist, which appeared in the Melbourne newspapers anent the wanton destruction of these interesting and profitable birds on the rookeries on Phillip Island, Western Port. Happily it is believed that the cruel cases cited by Mr. French are of rare occurrence. However, Mr. French was able to arouse the indignation of the Field Naturalists' Club, and it was resolved to recommend the Administrator of the *Game Act* to protect the Mutton Birds on the islands off the Victorian coast. Of course, there are other interests to be conserved—to wit, those of some of the islanders, whose staple food is Mutton Bird flesh and eggs when in season—therefore it is apprehended that any protection extended to the birds will not be absolute, but will merely regulate the traffic in eggs and young birds.

It was a coincidence that at the recent meeting of the Aust. O. U. at Adelaide, when it became known that the next annual meeting was to be held at Melbourne, an excursion to the rookeries on Phillip Island was casually mentioned, so that there would be an opportunity to ascertain whether or not it was time to regulate the birding traffic. Some of our older ornithologists have been keeping a "fatherly" eye on the rookeries on the island for years, to see if there be any diminution in the numbers of birds that annually visit the place. So far, the result of these casual observations has been slightly in favour of the birds.

It may be mentioned that this season there were an extraordinary number of egg-gatherers on the Cape Wollomai