

that struck me upon seeing the eggs was their resemblance to those of Honey-eaters, and since comparing them with the eggs of *Melithreptus* it is found that they could be easily assigned to members of that genus. The photograph of the nest and eggs, taken *in situ* by Mr. Waite, and reproduced in illustration of this paper (Plate XXXVII.), does not convey a correct idea of the position of the nest, owing to the salt-bush being between it and the camera. The nest was just beyond the bush, on the bare ground. When the nest was removed the hollow in the ground looked as if a rounded stone had been taken out. As the eggs were fresh, and as fully fledged young birds were taken a few days previously, it is evident that the breeding season was very much extended this year, most likely owing to the good season, with early and late rains. The photograph of the eggs was taken by Mr. Waite upon our return to Adelaide, the material of the nest forming the background. The photograph of the gibber country (Plate XXXVI.) was taken by myself at Innamincka, close to where we secured specimens of the Desert Chat, the foreground giving a good idea of the stony habitat of this bird.

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## Note on the Finding of the Nest and Eggs of the Desert Chat (*Ashbyia lovensis*, Ashby).

By EDGAR R. WAITE, F.L.S., DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM.

MUCH of the country traversed by the expedition is in the nature of what Sturt called the "Stony Desert," locally known as "gibber country," and further differentiated as large gibber and small gibber. The latter, with which we are at present only concerned, consists of reddish-brown stones, nowhere larger than a walnut; they lie close together, and in places are so even that one might almost imagine they had been levelled by a road roller. The interstices are filled with fine sand, the constant movement of which under action of the wind has smoothed all asperities from the stones, and a mosaic appearance is produced. In other places walking is less comfortable, and in crossing the big gibber riding a camel is preferable to walking. Such a desert may extend for 20 miles or more, and it supports very little herbage indeed, low and scattered salt-bushes being the only indication of vegetation.

The Desert Chat was found only in the gibber country, and was nowhere very common. Though the breast of the bird is bright yellow, the colour is not specially noticeable, while its brown back harmonizes so well with the colour of the stones, tempered with that of the sand, that a sitting bird must be quite inconspicuous. That the bird relies on such similarity to its surroundings when sitting is evidenced by its actions, as hereafter described.

The following incident happened on 14th October, on which date we had been two days without water; in consequence thereof we sent out scouts to a mile on each side of the camel train in the hope of finding some soakage or wet clay-pan. During one of my "watches," and when about 12 miles east of Mungeranie, I flushed a Desert Chat. The little bird did the "broken wing" trick very well indeed, and fluttered away, while I remained stationary. As soon as the bird was sufficiently distant I shot it with the .410, feeling that if I could find the nest it would be well to place the identity of the species (*Ashbyia lovensis*, Ashby) beyond dispute.

I found the nest within a yard and a half of my feet, concealed in a clump of salt-bush; it contained two eggs, and a third was lying a few inches away, having evidently been ejected by the bird in its hurried departure. This was the more remarkable as the nest was particularly deep. It was built in a hole in the small gibber, and when removed the hollow looked as if it had been artificially excavated, though it is not conceivable that the bird had removed the stones and sand. The hole would contain an average teacup, and the nest was built with a rim which extended beyond the hole for some distance all round. The groundwork of the nest consists of small twigs overlaid with fine roots interspersed with flower-heads to form a lining, and the fine roots were used to form the rim above mentioned.

The eggs are pale yellow in colour, with chestnut-brown blotches disposed around the larger end. In two of the specimens minute brown dots occur on other portions also. Before blowing the ground colour was pale pink, as with most small white or nearly white eggs. The eggs are larger and more pointed than in any species of *Ephthianura*, with which genus the bird was first associated, and measure 10.93 x 10.46, 10.97 x 10.47, and 10.94 x 10.45 mm. respectively.

The accompanying photograph was taken of the nest and eggs *in situ*, but, owing to the searching fine sand having interfered with the working of the shutter, the result is not so sharp as I could have wished.

It will be realized that under the circumstances above mentioned we could not afford much time on the ground for making observations, but I signalled to Capt. White, who was about a quarter of a mile distant, so that he, as ornithologist to the expedition, might have the opportunity of seeing the nest and eggs (previously unknown) in an undisturbed state.

## Record of a New Tree-creeper for South Australia.

By S. A. WHITE, M.B.O.U.

**Climacteris waitel**, sp. nov. Cooper's Creek Tree-creeper.

Head and forehead dark grey, feathers of the latter showing narrow dark lines down the centres; back of the neck grey; back