

visitor on spring and autumn migration to the British Islands, on very rare occasions remaining to breed. It is a summer visitor to the whole of Europe north of the valley of the Danube, and to Siberia, Turkestan, Mongolia, and the extreme north of China. It probably breeds as far north as land extends, as Middendorff found its nest in lat. 70° on the Taimyr Peninsula. It winters in the basin of the Mediterranean, and in suitable localities throughout Africa. In Asia it winters in Persia, Beloochistan, India, Ceylon, the Burma Peninsula, and the islands of the Malay Archipelago, but only passes through Japan and South China on migration."—A. MATTINGLEY.

The Scrub-Tit (*Acanthornis magna*).

BY A. L. BUTLER, A.O.U.

(Read before the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club, 12th June, 1905.)

THIS rare bird is peculiar to Tasmania. I have always been deeply interested in it since the year 1875, when I first observed it in one of the gullies on the slopes of Mount Wellington. A note taken at that time was to this effect:—"Saw a new bird to-day; was not Brown-tail (*Acanthiza*) or Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis*); had white spots on wing, and light yellow underneath." From that time up to the present I have always closely watched this bird, spending many hours in so doing.

In 1881 (October) I first found the nest, which was placed about 4 feet from the ground in a wild currant tree, just on the edge of the scrub, near the old Huon road, and was of the following dimensions:—Height, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches; diameter, 8 inches; width, $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches; and entrance, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; and contained three young birds about four days old. In 1883 I met Mr. A. J. Campbell, the noted oologist, on one of his visits to Hobart, and at his request procured a specimen of this bird for him. My next entry is made in 1885, when, on the 15th October, I took a set of three eggs from a nest, also in a native currant, but this time in a gully near the Old Farm. From that time up to the present I have inspected in all 27 nests with either eggs or young, and the average measurements are about the same as I have already given, but the position of the nests varies much, according to the kind of scrub in which it is situated. I have found them as low as 3 inches from the ground, and as high as 9 feet in grass and ferns, and then again in the dead fronds of the tree fern. This latter is a favourite place, especially on the northern slopes of the mountain—that is, Glenorchy and Kangaroo Valley—where all but one that I have found in those localities have been so placed. The last nest I took was the exception, this being in the favourite native currant, and, with the eggs (two in number), is now in the possession of Mr. D. Le Souëf.

I have only shot two specimens of this bird, one of which I dissected, and found that the stomach contained parts of various

insects, small snails, and beetles. This was an adult male. The other was the bird I shot for Mr. Campbell.

I have spent many hours watching this bird feeding and building its nest, and to my mind it closely resembles the Tree-creepers (*Certhiidae*). With its mouse-like movements, it will fly to the base of a tree fern, run rapidly to the top and down the other side, just pausing long enough to grasp an unwary beetle, or some such small object, then off again to another tree, and repeat the performance.

When building it is very wary, and if it sees anyone watching it will at once begin to put the material which it is carrying in quite a different place from where its nest is situate, and will do this for some time, making several trips and bringing material to do so. This I have noticed several times, and when the intruder has withdrawn for some time it will go on building at the nest, sometimes using the material it has placed in the false position, but more often leaving it where it was first put. They will go a long way for material suitable to their needs, and on one occasion I followed a pair of them for over a quarter of a mile. They had found a dead opossum, and were engaged in lining their home with its fur. It took me just over an hour to find that nest, though some 200 yards of the distance was open country.

Whilst it is feeding its note is a short "Cheep, cheep," but at times you will hear it trilling out a little song something like the Calamanthus (Field-Wren), but not so full or sustained as that bird's note.

It would be a difficult matter to place any limit to the distribution of this species, as I have seen members of it at the Huon, Carnarvon, North-West Bay River, Glenorchy, Bismarck, New Norfolk, &c., and as high up on the mountain as the Springs, and under the Organ Pipes.

There is just one word to say in closing, and that is, I hope that members and others will not destroy this interesting bird, but will remember that, as the land is being cleared, it will retire to the backwoods, and only leave a few of the more venturesome of the tribe to eke out an existence in some secluded spot. Watch them, note their habits, but do not take their life.

Stray Feathers.

FOUR CURIOUS NESTING PLACES.—I am sending two photos. of peculiar nesting places. One is the nest and three eggs of the Grey Thrush (*Collyriocincla harmonica*), in the wickerwork off a demijohn, and the other a nest and two eggs of the Pipit (*Anthus*). The latter was found on the Casterton Golf Links, the former in the scrub along the River Glenelg, evidently carried there at flood time. I have also had presented to me a nest with four eggs of the Little Crake (*Porzana palustris*). The nest was placed in an old jam tin in a vertical position, in a clump of