

Description of a New Sub-Species of *Acanthiza nana*.

BY H. L. WHITE, M.B.O.U., BELLTREES, SCONE, N.S.W.

***Acanthiza nana*.** Little Tit-Warbler.

A study of variation in this little species is interesting, as illustrated by the material in the H. L. White Collection at the National Museum, Melbourne.

Mr. G. M. Mathews recognizes *Acanthiza n. dorotheæ*, from Lithgow, as the richest ("much yellower") bird (*vide Emu*, vol. xiv., p. 60); but it does not appear so, judging by typical birds, say, from Blacktown or Rose Bay. The really richest specimens are from my own district—Belltrees (Upper Hunter), New South Wales. According to colour-chart, the under surface approximates a Strontian or strong citron-yellow. Hartert's *A. n. mathewsi*, from Eastern Victoria, is duller than either of the two more northern races. So much for the yellowish varieties.

Passing from heavily-timbered eastern Victoria to the more open western Mallee country and contiguous parts of South Australia, we have a variety (*A. n. pygmea*, Milligan) which is cream or straw-coloured on the under surface. Following up the inland country and proceeding north again, we pick up a similar phase at Cobbora, N.S.W., and still farther north, on the Dawson River, Central Queensland. Birds from the last-named locality have a decidedly larger and longer bill, not the "very short, fine bill" of *A. n. pygmea*. I venture to suggest that this extreme northern bird might be known as *A. n. dawsoniana*.

The R.A.O.U. "Check-list" includes Southern Queensland in the range of *Acanthiza nana*, but neither Mathews nor North does. Apparently the species has not previously been recorded from Central Queensland.

Notes on Birds Seen on the Murray River, August, 1918.

BY W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A., LIBRARIAN R.A.O.U.

THE writer had the pleasure of making a holiday trip by river steamer down the Murray from Swan Hill, Victoria, to Morgan, South Australia, in the last week of August, 1918. Since Capt. S. A. White, in *The Emu*, vol. xviii., p. 8, gave an account of the birds met with by himself and Dr. Morgan at Lake Victoria and on the Murray River for 100 miles down stream, it is unnecessary for me to describe the river itself or the extensive sheets of water extending from its banks in the flood season far away among the trees. Since, however, my journey extended over nearly 700 miles, and Captain White's account refers only to the 100 miles between Lake Victoria and Renmark, it is worth while to

point out that, judged from the standpoint of the ornithologist, the upper part of the river, where it is narrower and there are fewer settlements, is the more interesting, and that some species, notably Whistling-Eagles, are much more plentiful in the Victorian-New South Wales section of the river than in the South Australian. Since my observations were limited to birds seen from the moving steamer, or on the river banks during the short periods when the steamer stopped to take on wood for fuel or to discharge and load cargo, I naturally did not see as many species as Captain White and Dr. Morgan, who penetrated into the backwaters and flooded areas in a small boat. I actually identified 51 species of birds as against 131 recorded by Capt. White; but of these four species were not met with by him. I give below notes on these and on a few other species as to which my observations supplement those given by him.

Marsh Tern (*Hydrochelidon leucopareia*).—A small party flew past us when we were standing on the bank of a small billabong on the New South Wales bank of the river whilst the steamer was loading fuel. Their red beaks and black heads were conspicuous. Capt. White did not meet with this species.

White Ibis (*Ibis (Threskiornis) molucca*).—Plentiful between Swan Hill and Mildura, but only occasionally seen lower down.

White-eyed Duck (*Nyroca australis*).—Some very large flocks of "Wigeon" were seen on the river just below Wentworth, at the junction of the Darling and Murray, and some were seen lower down. Unlike the other species of Ducks, which were mostly in pairs, these birds were still in flocks. They were not met with by Capt. White.

Whistling-Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*).—Extremely abundant on the upper part of the river. Some were almost always to be seen sailing overhead, and their fine whistle is one of the characteristic sounds of the river. On the first day's journey, at almost every turn of the river one of these birds was seen to leave its nest on the approach of the steamer and join its mate in the air.

Little Falcon (*Falco longipennis*).—One was seen to fly across the river with a small bird in its talons. The species is not recorded by Capt. White.

Nankeen Kestrel (*Cerchneis cenchroides*).—These birds were evidently nesting on the cliffs along the lower part of the river.

Blue Kingfisher (*Alcyon azurea*).—One flew out of a hole in the bank as the steamer passed. The species was not met with by Capt. White.

Chestnut-crowned Babbler (*Pomatorhinus (Pomatostomus) ruficeps*).—During a walk through the mallee on the top of the cliff at Morgan we came on a family party of these birds. They made off when we were some distance away, but one young bird apparently got entangled in a bush, and its cries on our approach

brought the parents and the other young ones back to the spot. They flew round, calling out and spreading out their tails, giving us a fine view of them, until the youngster disentangled itself, when they all flew off together. Capt. White informs me that this species has not previously been met with so far down the river. It seems early for the young ones to be fledged.

Yellow-throated Miner (*Myzantha flavigula*).—Capt. White states that the Black-headed Miner, being much more robust, "seems to keep this bird back from the river timber." In the upper stretches, however, it appeared to be the commoner species in the trees along the river banks, though lower down there is no doubt that the Black-headed Miner is the more plentiful bird.

Some Observations by a Bird-lover in the Eastern Mallee Fringe, Victoria.

BY A. C. STONE, R.A.O.U., SOUTH YARRA, VICTORIA.

A FRIEND and myself were fortunate in having perfect weather for our trip into the Mallee fringe, and those of us who have had Mallee experience know how perfect the weather is sometimes (perhaps as a compensation for some of its imperfections), approximating closely to Egyptian conditions.

Leaving Lake Boga, we proceeded in a westerly direction, and one of the first nests found was the perfect and beautiful one of that Mallee gem, the Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*). The nest was placed 5 feet high on the fork of a tea-tree in the midst of a dense clump of the same timber. The nest contained three handsomely marked eggs. A few yards further a Black-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) came swooping down, plainly indicating by its movements the nearness of its nest, which was indeed close, but placed high in the branches of a box-tree, and contained fledgelings. The "Shellies" or Warbling Grass-Parrots (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) had only recently arrived, but all day long we were within sight of flocks of from 20 to 100. Within a fortnight I received word that they were all busily engaged at their severally selected nesting-sites. The White-browed Babblers (*Pomatorhinus superciliosus*) were particularly busy, as usual, building nests that apparently they had not the remotest idea of laying in. This habit seems very deep-seated in the nature of the Babblers. One nest we found contained three fresh eggs, very beautifully covered with the thin hair-like lines. Just over a limestone ridge, in some fallen mallee scrub, we found the cosy nest of the Black-backed Wren (*Malurus melanotus*), containing three young ones nearly ready to leave the nest, and the parent birds fussily objecting to the intruders. Farther on, in similar country, we found another nest of the same species almost completed. Wood-Swallows were plentiful, particularly the White-