

### New Sub-species of *Pachycephala olivacea.*

By HENRY L. WHITE, R.A.O.U., BELLTREES, SCONE, N.S.W.

WHILE collecting for me in the Macpherson Range, between New South Wales and Queensland, Mr. Sid. W. Jackson procured a single specimen, apparently a male, of this species, which differs from all other examples I have seen of *Pachycephala olivacea* (Vigors and Horsfield).

For this I would propose the sub-specific title *Pachycephala olivacea macphersonianus*. The bird was procured in the densely-wooded heights of the range, at an elevation above sea-level of nearly 4,000 feet.

The new bird differs from the southern form in being much lighter coloured, especially its dull greyish head, which more approaches slate-grey, while the outer edgings of the tail feathers are more decidedly yellow. In this specimen, however, the tail feathers were much abraded. Eyes coffee brown; feet horn-colour. Dimensions in the flesh, in millimetres:—Total length, 202; wing, 101; tarsus, 26; bill, 22.

*Note.*—From the organs, which were much damaged, Mr. Jackson diagnoses the sex "female (?)"; but the southern form lacks the greyish head and greyish band on the breast—both markings being characteristic of the male. Should, however, more material prove the above-described specimen to be a female, then the bird would take full specific rank, instead of being merely a sub-species.

### Field Notes on the Painted Honey-eater (*Entomophila picta*).

By J. S. P. RAMSAY, R.A.O.U., SYDNEY, N.S.W.

ON 26th January, 1901, while observing near Abbotsford on the Parramatta River, about seven miles from Sydney, I was surprised to find a small flock of Painted Honey-eaters feeding among the flowering cones of a large species of *Banksia*. On the 31st a pair was noticed building in a small "bloodwood" (*Eucalyptus*, sp.) at a height of about 20 feet, the nest being slung between the seed-pods in the outer branches, and of so frail a structure that it would scarcely have been recognized had not the birds visited it frequently. Seven days later it contained two eggs. This provides, I believe, the first record of these birds for the locality about Sydney.

My next acquaintance with the species was in December, 1915. While camped by the Nepean River I noted a male feeding in the Mistletoe (*Loranthus*), which is there growing in such abundance upon the Sheoaks (*Casuarina*). A close search, however, failed to discover either a female or a nest.

Christmas eve, 1919, found me at the same place, and as the camping ground was approached I was delighted to find the birds so numerous that, during that and the following week-end, nine nests were discovered within an area of about half a mile by a quarter. They were all built among the outer branches of Casuarinas; one actually overhanging the water. They varied in height from 12 to 30 feet. Six of the nine held two young birds each, two each contained two heavily-incubated eggs, and one nest discovered when being built was later deserted, probably owing to continued heavy rain.

All the birds were exceedingly tame, and paid little attention to anything but their particular duty at the time. This was well instanced by the fact that, in an endeavour to obtain some photographs, I sat for some hours within a measured six feet of a nest containing two young birds, without causing the parents any apparent misgiving. Unfortunately the conditions were most unsuitable for the work, both as regards the weather and the camera employed. Both parents fed the young continually, at intervals of five to ten minutes, with the exception of about two hours at mid-day, during which only an occasional visit was paid to the nest.

The only food supplied was Mistletoe berries which appeared to have the outer skin removed, leaving visible the sticky substance surrounding the seed.

Close observers will have noticed that the adult birds of several genera will frequently devour the small sac excreted by their young; at this nest I occasionally saw the parent seize the excreta from one young and immediately feed the other with it. The berry, however, seemed to be in almost the same state as when devoured, and probably the excessive excitement always exhibited by the young upon the parents' arrival caused the action before the fleshy covering had been digested from the seed proper.

The adult birds are most bright and showy, always on the move, and continually calling to one another. They will fly long distances direct from and to different feeding trees, or from feeding trees to the nest, which makes nest-finding a much easier matter than it would otherwise be, as the scanty structure of a few interlaced rootlets is practically invisible among the attenuated "leaves" of the Casuarinas.

Both parents incubate, and the male feeds the female constantly, though I did not observe the reverse to be the case.

Nearly all the adults showed a black spot or two on the breast, but the breasts of some of the young that could fly were of a beautiful snowy white. The backs of the juveniles were a fuscous or dusky drab, and their bills had not attained the beautiful pinkish-lilac of the bills of their parents. The eyes also had a greyish tinge that was lacking in the adult specimens.\*

\* A nice series of juvenile skins has been added to the "H. L. White Collection," National Museum, Melbourne.



Male Painted Honey-eater (*Entomophila picta*) feeding young.

PHOTO. BY J. S. P. RAMSAY, R.A.O.U.