ÆLURŒDUS GEISLERORUM, Meyer.

Geisler's Cat-bird.

Ælurædus geislerorum, Meyer, Abhandl. k. zool. Mus. Dresden, 1890-91, no. 4, p. 12.—Id. J. f. O. 1892, p. 202.— Id. Abhandl. k. zool. Mus. Dresden, 1892-93, no. 3, p. 23 (1893).—Madarász, Aquila, i. p. 91 (1894).—Sharpe, Bull. Brit. Orn. Club, iv. p. xiv (1894).

This Cat-bird was described by Dr. A. B. Meyer from specimens obtained in Kaiser Wilhelm's Land in German New Guinea by the brothers Geisler, after whom the species has been named. The original specimens were procured in Astrolabe Bay, at Lolebu and Bussum, to the north of Huon Gulf, in July, August, December, and January, and the species was also obtained by the Geislers at a place called Butarieng, which is one of the stations of the German New Guinea Company, and is situated near the mouth of the Bubui River. Other localities in which the species was met with are—Finsch Harbour in March, Bukawasip in Huon Gulf in April, Memming in June, and again at Butarieng in August and October. The brave Hungarian traveller, Fenichel, who lost his life in exploring this portion of New Guinea, also obtained specimens of Geisler's Cat-bird at Bonga in November. And this apparently is all that is known respecting the range of Ælurædus geislerorum.

The species is allied to Ælurædus buccoides, but has a very differently coloured head, this being much paler and more of a tawny-olive shade, while the spots on the breast are much larger and more pronounced. Little has been recorded of its habits. Fenichel says that its note resembles the sound 'Aach-aach,' and it is called by the natives 'Kubuas.' The Geislers state that the species is generally distributed in the parts of the country visited by them, but could not be considered common. It is always found in pairs. The male suddenly utters his note of warning, a long-drawn, hoarse-sounding 'tschaa,' the female quickly answering and repeating the call. In this way the bird is continually in evidence to the collector, and is easy to kill, though it requires a practised eye to detect the bird amongst the surrounding foliage.

The following is the description of a specimen collected by the late Mr. Fenichel:—

General colour above grass-green, with the wings of the same colour as the back, the inner secondaries with a whitish tip to their outer webs; bastard-wing, primary-coverts, and quills blackish, externally green, inclining to olive towards the end of the primaries; tail-feathers blackish, externally green, inclining to ashy white at the extreme tips; crown of head tawny olive or ochreous brown; lores and sides of face and earcoverts white; chin and cheeks spotted with black, forming a broad moustachial band; throat white; sides of neck entirely black, forming a large patch behind the ear-coverts and crossing the nape in a black band; hinder neck pale yellowish, washed with green, and having large triangular spots of black; remainder of under surface of body, from the lower throat downward, pale ochreous yellow, with a slight tinge of greenish on the flanks, the breast and sides of the body thickly marked with large triangular spots of black, becoming smaller on the lower part of the abdomen and disappearing entirely on the under tail-coverts; under wingcoverts white; axillaries ochreous buff: bill pale yellowish white; iris carmine. Total length 10.5 inches, culmen 1.05, wing 5.2, tail 3.65, tarsus 1.45.

Dr. Meyer mentions that two specimens collected by the brothers Geisler at Bukawasip had the iris brown. The Plate represents an adult bird in two positions, and is drawn from the specimen above described.