AMBLYORNIS SUBALARIS, Sharpe.

Orange-crested Bower-bird.

Amblyornis subalaris, Sharpe, Journ. Linn. Soc., Zool. xvii. p. 408 (1884).—Finsch u. Meyer, Zeitschr. ges. Orn. ii. p. 390, pl. xxi. (1885).—Id. Ibis, 1886, p. 257.—Sharpe, Nature, p. cccxl (1886).—Id. in Gould's B. New Guin. vol. i. pl. 47 (1886).—D'Hamonv. Bull. Soc. Zool. France, xi. p. 511 (1886).—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. W. (2) ii. p. 250 (1887).—Salvad. Agg. Orn. Pap. ii. p. 165 (1890).—Goodwin, P. Z. S. 1889, p. 451.—Id. Ibis, 1890, p. 155.—De Vis, Ann. Rep. Brit. New Guinea, p. 61 (1890).—Id. Colonial Papers, no. 103, p. 113 (1890).—Id. Ibis, 1891, p. 37.—Salvad. Agg. Orn. Pap. iii. p. 243 (1891).—De Vis, Ann. Rep. Brit. New Guinea, 1890–91, p. 95 (1892).

This remarkable species of Bower-bird was first discovered by Mr. Goldie, in the Astrolabe Range of the Owen-Stanley Mountains, in South-eastern New Guinea. He procured only the female bird, which remained in the British Museum for many months before I ventured to describe it as distinct from the Bower-bird of the Arfak Mountains, A. inornata. It seemed to be, however, a distinct species, and I at last gave it a name, little dreaming that in the following year the male bird would be discovered, and would turn out to be such a beautiful and striking form of Bower-bird. Although resembling A. inornata in the plain brown plumage of the body, it excels that species in the possession of a gorgeous orange crest. This led me to suppose that A. inornata might also be found to possess an equally brilliant decoration of the head, but Count Salvadori aptly remarks that too many specimens of the Arfak bird, of both sexes, have been received by European Museums to render it possible that the species possesses any crest or particular ornament, such as we find in the Bower-bird from South-eastern New Guinea.

The adult males referred to above were procured by the late Mr. Carl Hunstein in that part of the Astrolabe Mountains which he called the Horseshoe Range, and Sir William Macgregor has also discovered the species on Mount Musgrave, at a height of from 6000 to 9000 feet, and on Mount Suckling, at a height of 4100 feet. He procured a male bird in the vicinity of its bower, which is described in Mr. De Vis's Zoological Report attached to the Blue-book of 1892:—

"This bower is built of twigs arranged in the shape of a shallow circular basin, about 3 feet in diameter, the side being some 6 inches higher than the centre. The whole of the basin is covered with a carpet of the greenest and most delicate moss, which, as it is of a different kind to that growing around on the ground, trees, roots, &c., led me to conjecture that it had been planted by the bird itself. The surface is scrupulously cleared of all leaves, twigs, &c. In the centre of the basin a small tree, without branches, about 2 inches in diameter, is growing. Immediately around this tree, and supported by it to the height of about 2 feet, is erected a light structure of small sticks and twigs, placed horizontally, and crossing one another. On the extreme outer edge of the basin a more substantial collection of twigs had been built up, which was arched above so as to join the collection around the centre pole, leaving a clear space beneath for the bird to pass through in his gambols. The basin has two entrances leading into it. They are 4 or 5 inches apart, and are formed by a depression or gap in the outer rim. The bower is placed immediately to the right of the entrances. At the opposite side to the entrances, and on the highest part of the raised rim of the basin, is placed a quantity of black sticks (4 inches or so in length), black beans, and the black wing-coverings of large coleoptera. Black is evidently the most attractive colour to this bird."

I have reproduced the illustrations which accompany Mr. De Vis's Report.

