

## SITTELLA STRIATA, Gould.

### Striated Sittella.

*Sittella striata*, Gould in Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., 4th ser., vol. iv. p. 110.

SINCE the discovery of the *Sittella chrysoptera* of the southern coast of Australia, some seventy or more years ago, five additional and well-defined species of this peculiarly Australian genus of tree-runners have been discovered, namely, the *S. leucocephala* of Southern Queensland, *S. leucoptera* of the Cobourg Peninsula, *S. pileata* of Southern and Western Australia, *S. tenuirostris* (found by Captain Sturt in the interior, and so named by me in my 'Handbook to the Birds of Australia,' vol. i. p. 610), and the present species. *S. tenuirostris* I have not yet figured; for the only specimen I have ever seen is in an imperfect state of plumage, and I therefore anxiously await the arrival of others to enable me to do so correctly.

Of this new species I have seen four or five examples, collected on the Cape-York peninsula by Mr. Cockerell, who tells me that the bird is common there, moving about in little bands of five or six in number, and if one be shot the whole may be procured, as the remainder immediately come fluttering round; it is constantly engaged in running over the branches of the larger trees, like the other species of the genus. Some specimens have jet-black heads and throats, that hue even extending on to the chest, while in others the black colouring is nearly confined to the crown; but one and all are conspicuously striated with blackish brown, both on the upper and under surface. It has not been ascertained by dissection whether the black-throated individuals are males; one would naturally suppose that they are; and I should not have had any doubt on the subject, had I not been aware that in *S. pileata* there is more black on the head of the female than on that of the other sex—a circumstance which induced me to describe the former as distinct, under the specific appellation of *melanocephala*, a term which is strictly applicable to the present species, but which, of course, cannot be used. I therefore selected the term *striata* as expressive of its next most conspicuous feature. It will be observed that one of the three specimens figured on the accompanying Plate is greyish white immediately above the bill—a feature which may indicate a youthful state of the bird.

The male has the whole of the head, neck, throat, and breast black; all the upper surface pale brown, with a blackish-brown stripe down the centre of each feather: under surface striated in a similar manner; but the streaks are narrower, not so dark, and the edges of the feathers are also lighter and on the centre of the abdomen are nearly pure white: primaries black, with a large spot of white near the base, and faintly tipped with brown; secondaries dark brown, margined with pale brown; upper tail-coverts white; under tail-coverts white, with a large tear-shaped spot of dark brown in the centre of each; tail black, the lateral feathers tipped with white increasing in extent as the feathers recede from the centre; circle round the eye, base of the bill, and the legs and feet yellow; tip of the bill black.

Total length 4 inches, bill  $\frac{3}{8}$ , wing 3, tail  $1\frac{1}{4}$ , tarsi  $\frac{5}{8}$ .

The female differs in having the crown and nape only black, and in the striation of the under surface extending from the bill to the vent.

The figures are of the natural size.