

## CHLAMYDERA CERVINIVENTRIS, Gould.

### Fawn-breasted Bower-bird.

*Chlamydera cerviniventris*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part xviii. p. 201.

If any one circumstance more than another would tend to hand down the name of the author of the "Birds of Australia" to posterity, it would be the discovery and the publication of the singular habits of the Bower-birds. In figuring and describing, then, an additional species of this group of birds, I feel that I am presenting to the notice of the ornithological world another of the most interesting birds with which we are acquainted. The discovery of the present species is due to Mr. John MacGillivray, who procured a specimen at Cape York, secured its curious bower, and transmitted both to the British Museum. The two formerly known and nearly allied species being both conspicuously adorned with a lovely frill of liliaceous feathers at the nape of the neck, I naturally supposed that the same kind of ornament would be found in all the species; but it appears that such is not the case, for there is not a trace of it in any of the examples of *C. cerviniventris* I have yet seen; and I believe some of them are very old birds. In size this species is rather larger than *C. maculata*, or almost intermediate between that species and *C. nuchalis*; it has also a similar character of markings on the back, but the brown spots are neither so large, so round, nor so deeply coloured: the distinguishing feature of the present species is its rich, uniformly-coloured, buff under surface, a feature which does not exist either in the *C. maculata* or *C. nuchalis*. The bower differs very remarkably from those of the other two species; it is about 13 inches long and 10 or 11 inches high; its walls, which are very thick, are nearly upright, or but little inclining towards each other at the top, so that the passage through is very narrow. This elevated structure, which is formed of fine twigs, is placed on a very thick platform of thicker twigs, nearly 4 feet in length and almost as much in breadth: here and there a small snail-shell or berry is dropped in the way of decoration.

The following note relative to this bird is extracted from Mr. MacGillivray's "Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake:"—

"Two days before we left Cape York, I was told that some Bower-birds had been seen in a thicket or patch of low scrub, half a mile from the beach; and after a long search I found a recently-constructed bower, 4 feet long and 18 inches high, with some fresh berries lying upon it. The bower was situated near the border of the thicket, the bushes composing which were seldom more than 10 feet high, growing in smooth sandy soil without grass.

"Next morning I was landed before daylight, and proceeded to the place in company with Paidá, taking with us a large board on which to carry off the bower as a specimen. I had great difficulty in inducing my friend to accompany me, as he was afraid of a war party of Gomokudins, which tribe had lately given notice that they were coming to fight the Evans Bay people. However, I promised to protect him, and loaded one barrel with ball, which gave him increased confidence; still he insisted upon carrying a large bundle of spears and a throwing-stick.

"While watching in the scrub, I caught several glimpses of the *tewingá* (the native name) as it darted through the bushes in the neighbourhood of the bower, announcing its presence by an occasional loud *churr-r-r*, and imitating the notes of various other birds, especially the Leatherhead. I never before met with a more wary bird; and, for a long time, it enticed me to follow it to a short distance, then flying off and alighting on the bower it would deposit a berry or two, run through and be off again before I could reach the spot. All this time it was impossible to get a shot. At length, just as my patience was becoming exhausted, I saw the bird enter the bower and disappear, when I fired at random through the twigs, fortunately with effect. So closely had we concealed ourselves latterly, and so silent had we been, that a kangaroo, while feeding, actually hopped up within fifteen yards, unconscious of our presence until fired at. My Bower-bird proved to be a new species, since described by Mr. Gould as *Chlamydera cerviniventris*; and the bower is exhibited in the British Museum."

When Mr. MacGillivray speaks of the bird alighting on the top of the bower, he must mean on the platform, as, from the fineness of the twigs of which the bower itself is constructed, with the weaker ends upwards, they could not support the weight of the bird.

Upper surface brown, each feather of the back and wings margined and marked at the tip with buffy white; throat striated with greyish brown and buff; under surface of the shoulder, abdomen, thighs, and under tail-coverts light pure fawn-colour.

The front figure is of the size of life.