

## SPHENURA BROADBENTI, M'Coy.

### Rufous-headed Bristle-bird.

*Sphenura Broadbenti*, M'Coy, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist., 3rd ser. vol. xix. p. 185, and vol. xx. p. 179.

My thanks are hereby tendered to Professor M'Coy and the Governors of the National Museum at Melbourne, for their liberality in sending to London, for my use, the only specimen of this bird which has as yet been discovered, and which I consider to be one of the most important and interesting species that the colony of Victoria has unfolded to us, because it is the third species of a genus characterized by many peculiarities, and of a form that hitherto has only been found in Australia. It will scarcely be necessary to point out the difference between this bird and the old *Sphenura brachyptera* and *S. longirostris*; for they can never be confounded, the feature which has induced Professor M'Coy to assign to the former the trivial name of Rufous-headed Bristle-bird being non-existent in the others, which are nearly uniform in their colouring; it is also much the largest and finest bird of the three. Professor M'Coy states that, not having seen a second example, he is not certain if the individual he has described had attained to maturity; but on this point I have no doubt, and unhesitatingly assert that it is fully adult. In all probability the female, when discovered, will not differ in colouring, but, as is the case with the other species, will be somewhat smaller than the male. My Plate, which represents the bird in two positions, will enable ornithologists, both in Australia and elsewhere, to form a just conception of this *rara avis*. Many other new species of birds will doubtless yet come to light when the dense scrubby portions of Australia are more closely investigated than they have yet been. Many peculiar physical features characterize that great southern land; and each has to be closely searched before we can gain a complete knowledge of its inhabitants.

I have carefully compared the bird with Professor M'Coy's description, published in the Annals and Magazine of Natural History above referred to, and find it to be so correct that it is only an act of justice to that gentleman to transcribe it and his accompanying remarks.

"Back, shoulders, and flanks dull brown; wings and tail of a slightly richer and more rufous brown, the tail-feathers in some lights seeming to be transversely marked with faint, glossy, transverse, narrow bands of a slightly lighter shade; crown, nape, and ear-coverts rich chestnut or rufous brown; a triangular spot in front of and slightly over each eye, and the throat, greyish white; feathers of the breast lunulated, greyish white at their margins, dull brownish like the flanks at the base; the greyish white extends in a narrow track along the middle of the abdomen; legs, feet, upper part, and tip of the bill dark brown; lateral margins of the upper mandible and the basal portion of the lower one yellowish.

"Length 7 inches 9 lines; bill, from gape  $11\frac{1}{2}$  lines, from forehead 7 lines; wings 3 inches  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lines; tail 4 inches 10 lines; tarsi 1 inch 2 lines.

"The greater length of the wing, tarsi, and bill easily distinguish this species from the two previously known, as well as the rufous head and ears and the greyish-white instead of buff colour over the front of the eye. I am uncertain what value should be attached to the much darker and stronger lunulation of the breast-feathers, as I have only seen one specimen, and am not certain whether it has attained maturity. The bill is stronger, being deeper as well as longer, and slightly more arched in the culmen than in the *S. brachyptera*, to which it is most nearly allied. The sixth primary is also slightly longer than the fifth and seventh, which are equal; the claws are rather stouter than in that species, and the three or four large rectal bristles are weaker.

"The specimen described was presented to the museum at Melbourne by Mr. Broadbent, who shot it in December 1858, in a dense scrub 24 miles from Portland Bay, while it was uttering a note like that of an English Thrush, and running over logs on the ground. I have not since seen another specimen."

The figures are of the natural size.