

## ARDETTA: FLAVICOLLIS.

### Yellow-necked Bittern.

*Ardea flavicollis*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 701.—Wagl. Syst. Nat., Ardea, sp. 16.

*Ardea nigra*, Vieill. 2nd Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xiv. p. 417.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., Part iii. p. 1118.

*Yellow-necked Heron*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., p. 239.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. ix. p. 134.

*Ardetta flavicollis*, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., Part iii. p. 84.

*Wôr-gorl*, Aborigines of Port Essington.

*Little Brown Bittern* of the Colonists.

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I HAVE received this beautiful species from New South Wales, Swan River and Port Essington; it was also obtained by Governor Grey on the north-west coast. Both Latham and Wagler assert that it inhabits Java and that it extends its range to the continent of India, and although I do not question the truth of this assertion, I must state that the specimens I have seen from those countries are smaller in all their admeasurements than those from Australia; much difference however occurs in the size and colouring of the sexes, and it may be that the few individuals which have come under my notice from India and Java were females.

The Yellow-necked Bittern is exclusively an inhabitant of the mangroves, from which it is not easily driven, but it readily eludes pursuit by the facility with which it runs over the mud beneath the roots of the mangroves, which it will do for a long time and distance, and it must be very closely followed up before it can be forced to take wing.

Eggs were taken on the 6th of January, in a nest formed of small sticks resting on a slender horizontal branch of a mangrove; they were two in number, very much paler bluish green and more rounded in form than those of any other species of the group, being one inch and a half long by one inch and an eighth broad.

The male has the crown of the head, back of the neck and all the upper surface bronzy black; primaries and tail bluish slate-colour; chin whitish; throat deep buff, the feathers down the centre of the chin and throat having their inner webs pale buff and their tips blackish brown, giving the whole a richly variegated appearance; elongated feathers of the breast pale brown, narrowly margined with buff; under surface greyish brown, stained with buff; irides yellow; bill dark horn-colour; feet olive-brown.

The female differs in having the colours of the throat less brilliant and contrasted, and the upper surface of a lighter brown than that of the male.

The Plate represents the two sexes rather less than the natural size.