MELIPHAGA MYSTACALIS, *Gould.*

Moustached Honey-eater.

Meliphaga mystacalis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VIII. p. 161.
Baň-dene, Aborigines of Swan River.

At the time I described this new species of *Meliphaga* in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society," I was not aware that M. Temminck had applied the term *mystacalis* to another species of Honey-eater, or I should have selected a different appellation; as however M. Temminck's bird belongs to a distinct section of this great family, any alteration would rather tend to produce confusion than otherwise.

The *Meliphaga mystacalis* is a native of Western Australia, in which country it beautifully represents the *Meliphaga sericea* of New South Wales. It is abundant in the vicinity of Perth and Fremantle, and is sparingly dispersed over many other districts of the Swan River colony; according to Mr. Gilbert it is remarkably shy, and only found in the most secluded places in the bush, or on the summits of the limestone hills running parallel with the beach; it generally feeds on the topmost branches of the *Banksiæ*, and is very pugnacious, defending its young from intruders with the most determined courage.

Its note is a loud chirp, which is often rapidly repeated six or seven times in succession; but while rising on the wing, it emits a song very much resembling that of the Tree Lark of Europe.

Its flight, which is very varied, is occasionally characterized by a great degree of rapidity: during the season of incubation it frequently rises above its nest in a perpendicular direction, and having attained a considerable height, suddenly closes its wings, and descends abruptly until it reaches the top of the scrub, when the wings are again expanded, and it flies horizontally for a few yards, perches, and then utters its peculiar sharp, chirping note; it also often hovers over small trees, and captures insects after the manner of the Flycatchers.

It is a very early breeder, young birds ready to leave the nest having been found on the 8th of August; it has also been met with breeding as late as November; it doubtless therefore produces more than one brood in the course of the season. The nest is generally built near the top of a small, weak, thinly-branched bush, of about two or three feet in height, situated in a plantation of seedling mahogany or other *Eucalypti*; it is formed of small dried sticks, grass, and narrow strips of soft bark, and is usually lined with *Zamia* wool; but in those parts of the country where that plant is not found, the soft buds of flowers, or the hairy, flowering part of grasses, form the lining material, and in the neighbourhood of sheep-walks, wool collected from the scrub. The eggs are usually two in number, but frequently only a single one is laid and hatched. They are nine lines long by seven lines broad, and are usually of a dull reddish buff, spotted very distinctly with chestnut and reddish brown, interspersed with obscure dashes of purplish grey; but they appear to differ considerably in colour and form; I have seen one variety in which the ground colour was nearly white and destitute of markings, except at the larger end, where it was clouded with dull reddish brown.

The stomach is small and muscular, and the food consists of small coleoptera and other insects.

The sexes are only distinguishable by the smaller size of the female.

Head, chin and throat black; over the eye a narrow line of white; ears covered by a conspicuous tuft of white feathers, which are closely set and terminate in a point towards the back; upper surface brownish black, the feathers edged with white; under surface white, with a broad stripe of black down the centre of each feather; wings and tail blackish brown, conspicuously margined with bright yellow; irides brown; bill black; feet blackish brown.

The figures are of the natural size, and represent the bird on a species of *Banksia*, one of a tribe of trees on which it is most frequently found.