POMATORHINUS TEMPORALIS.

Temporal Pomatorhinus.

Dusky Bee-eater, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 146.
Pomatorhinus temporalis, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 330.—Sturt, Travels in Australia, vol. ii. pl. in p. 190.
———— *trivirgatus*, Temm. Pl. Col., 443.

As I have never seen an example of this species from any other portion of Australia than New South Wales, its habitat would appear to be restricted to that part of the country, where it is to be met in all those districts in which the *Angophoræ* and *Eucalypti* abound; it is gregarious in its habits, six or eight being generally seen in company, and is an exceedingly noisy and garrulous species; it ascends the trees with great rapidity in a succession of leaps from branch to branch, or along the slanting boles of those that are not perfectly erect: commencing with the branches nearest the ground it gradually ascends to the very top, whence with elevated tail it peeps down and continually utters its peculiar chattering cry; it is frequently to be seen on the ground, but on the slightest alarm it resorts to the trees and ascends them in the manner described. Its powers of flight are not very great, and appear to be only employed to convey it from the top of one tree to another, the whole troop following one after the other.

The situation of the nest is somewhat varied; when placed on the *Casuarinæ* it is usually constructed close to the stem of the tree, but on the *Eucalypti* it is mostly built at the extremity of the branch, and often within reach of the hand: it is of a large size, and very much resembles that of the Magpie of Europe, being of a completely domed form, outwardly composed of small long twigs about the size of a thorn, crossing each other, but very slightly interwoven: the entrance is in the form of a spout about half the length of an arm, and the twigs are placed in such a manner that the points incline towards each other, rendering it apparently impossible for the bird to enter without breaking them, while egress, on the other hand, is very easy; the nest has a thick inner lining, weighing several pounds, of the fine inner bark of trees and fine grasses. In traversing the pasture-lands at Camden, the whole of the Upper Hunter district and some parts of the Liverpool Plains, the attention of the traveller is often attracted by the large nest of this bird; and it frequently happens that four, six or even eight are to be seen on the same, or two or three closely planted trees.

The ground colour of their singular and beautifully marked eggs, which are four in number, is a buffy brown, clouded with dark brown and purple, and strongly marked with hair-like lines of black, which generally have a tendency to run round the egg; in some instances, however, they take a diagonal direction and give the egg a marble-like appearance; the markings of these eggs may be more easily imagined, by supposing a hair or hairs to have been carelessly drawn over them after having been dipped in ink; the eggs are one inch in length by nine lines in breadth.

The food consists of insects of various kinds.

The sexes do not differ in outward appearance, and may be thus described:—

Throat, centre of the breast and a broad stripe over each eye white; lores and ear-coverts dark brown; centre of the crown, back and sides of the neck greyish brown, gradually deepening into very dark brown on the wing-coverts, back and scapularies; wings very dark brown, with the exception of the inner webs of the primaries, which are rufous for three-fourths of their length from the base; tail-coverts and tail black, the latter largely tipped with pure white; abdomen and flanks dark brown, stained with rusty red; bill blackish olive-brown, except the basal portion of the lower mandible, which is greyish white; irides in the adult straw-yellow, in the young brown; feet blackish brown.

The figures are of the natural size.