## PTILONORHYNCHUS HOLOSERICEUS, Kuhl.

Satin Bower-bird.

Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus, Kuhl, Beytr. zur Zool. S. 150.—Wagl. Syst. Av. sp. 1.—G. R. Gray, Gen. of Birds, p. 40.—Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 271.

Pyrrhocorax violaceus, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. vi. p. 569.—Ib. Ency. Méth. 1823, p. 896.

Kitta holosericea, Temm. Pl. Col. 395 and 422.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 350, pl. 46. fig. 1.

Satin Grakle, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 171.

Ptilonorhynchus MacLeayii, Lath. MSS., Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 263.

Corvus squamulosus, Ill., female or young?

Ptilonorhynchus squamulosus, Wagl. Syst. Av. sp. 2, female or young?

Satin Bird, of the Colonists of New South Wales.

Cowry, of the Aborigines of the coast of New South Wales.

Although this species has been long known to ornithologists, and is familiar to the colonists of New South Wales, its habits, which in many respects are most extraordinary, have hitherto escaped attention; or if not entirely so, have never been brought before the scientific world. It is, therefore, a source of high gratification to myself to be the first to place them on record.

One point to which I more particularly allude,—a point of no ordinary interest, both to the naturalist and the general admirer of nature,—is the formation of a bower-like structure by this bird for the purpose of a playing-ground or hall of assembly, a circumstance in its economy which adds another to the many anomalies connected with the Fauna of Australia.

The localities favourable to the habits of the Satin Bower-bird are the luxuriant and thickly-foliaged brushes stretching along the coast from Port Philip to Moreton Bay, the cedar brushes of the Liverpool range, and most of the gullies of the great mountain-chain separating the colony from the interior. So far as is at present known, it is restricted to New South Wales; certainly it is not found so far to the westward as South Australia, and I am not aware of its having been seen on the north coast; but its range in that direction can only be determined by future research.

It is a stationary species, but appears to range from one part of a district to another, either for the purpose of varying the nature, or of obtaining a more abundant supply of food. Judging from the contents of the stomachs of the many specimens I dissected, it would seem that it is altogether granivorous and frugivorous, or if not exclusively so, that insects form but a small portion of its diet. Independently of numerous berry-bearing plants and shrubs, the brushes it inhabits are studded with enormous fig-trees, some of them towering to the height of two hundred feet; among the lofty branches of these giants of the forest, the Satin Bower-bird and several species of Pigeons find in the small wild fig, with which the branches are loaded, an abundant supply of a favourite food: this species also commits considerable depredation on any ripening corn near the localities it frequents. It appears to have particular times in the day for feeding, and when thus engaged among the low shrub-like trees, I have approached within a few feet without creating alarm; but at other times I have found this bird extremely shy and watchful, especially the old males, which not unfrequently perch on the topmost branch or dead limb of the loftiest tree in the forest, whence they can survey all around, and watch the movements of the females and young in the brush below.

In the autumn they associate in small flocks, and may often be seen on the ground near the sides of rivers, particularly where the brush descends in a steep bank to the water's edge.

Besides the loud liquid call peculiar to the male, both sexes frequently utter a harsh, unpleasant, guttural note indicative of surprise or displeasure. The old black males are exceedingly few in number, as compared with the females and young male birds in the green dress, from which and other circumstances I am led to believe that at least two, if not three years, elapse before they attain the rich satin-like plumage, which, when once perfectly assumed, is, I believe, never again thrown off.

I regret to state, that although I used my utmost endeavours, I could never discover the nest and eggs of this species, neither could I obtain any authentic information respecting them, either from the natives or the colonists, of whom I made frequent inquiries.

The extraordinary bower-like structure, alluded to above, first came under my notice at Sydney, to the Museum of which place an example had been presented by Mr. Charles Coxen, as the work of the Satin Bower-bird. I at once determined to leave no means untried for ascertaining every particular relating to this peculiar feature in the bird's economy, and on visiting the cedar-brushes of the Liverpool range I discovered several of these bowers or playing-places; and a glance at the accompanying illustration will, I presume, give a more correct idea of the nature of these erections than the most minute description. They are usually placed under the shelter of the branches of some overhanging tree in the most retired part of the forest: they differ considerably in size, some being a third larger than the one here represented, while others are much smaller. The base consists of an extensive and rather convex platform of sticks firmly interwoven, on the centre of which the bower itself is built: this, like the platform on which it is placed and with which it is interwoven, is formed of sticks and twigs, but of a more slender and flexible descrip-