

AMADINA LATHAMI.

Spotted-sided Finch.

Fringilla leucocephala, var., Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xlvi. — Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. ix. p. 493.

Spotted Grosbeak, Lewin, Birds of New Holl., pl. ix.

White-headed Finch, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 210. pl. 132.

Spotted-sided Grosbeak, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. v. p. 248. pl. lxxxix.

Fringilla Lathamii, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 256.

THIS bird is very generally dispersed over the southern portion of the Australian continent; I found it plentiful in South Australia and in every part of New South Wales that I visited; and it was equally numerous beyond the boundary of the colony on the Liverpool Plains, the Namoi, &c. It is a showy attractive species, and passes much of its time on the ground, where it procures its food, which consists of the seeds of various kinds of grasses, &c.; upon being compelled to rise from the ground it merely flies into the nearest tree, the scarlet rump showing very conspicuously during these short flights.

The most singular part of this bird's history is the site often chosen for its nest, which is frequently built among the large sticks forming the under surface of the nest of the smaller species of Eagles, and that too during the time the Eagle is sitting, both species hatching and rearing their progeny in harmony; this I have witnessed in several instances, and have taken the eggs of the Eagle and of the Finch at the same time, as mentioned in the following extract from my journal:—"Oct. 23. Found the nest of *Amadina Lathamii* placed under and among the sticks of a Whistling Eagle's (*Haliastur? sphenurus*) nest, in which latter the old bird was then sitting. My black companion Natty ascended the tree, a high swamp oak (*Casuarina*) on the bank of the Dartbrook, and brought down the eggs of both birds. The little Finches were sitting on the small twigs close to their rapacious but friendly neighbour." At other times the nest is placed on the leafy branch of a gum- or apple-tree. It is of a large size, and is constructed of grasses of various kinds; in form it is nearly spherical, with a short pendent spout on one side, through which the bird obtains access to the interior; the eggs are white, rather long in shape, and five or six in number.

The sexes offer little or no difference in the markings of their plumage.

Crown of the head and back of the neck brownish grey; back and wings brown, becoming deeper on the tips of the primaries; lores, a broad band across the breast, flanks and tail deep black; each feather of the flanks with a large spot of white near the tip; rump and upper tail-coverts shining scarlet; throat, abdomen and under tail-coverts white; irides red, surrounded by a narrow, naked, lilac-red lash; bill blood-red, passing into lilac at the base and on the culmen; feet purplish brown.

The young for the first year has the bill black, except at the base, where it is flesh-colour; the band across the breast and the flanks greyish brown, the latter being barred indistinctly with black and greyish white; in other respects the plumage nearly resembles the adult.

The Plate represents an adult male and a young bird of the natural size.