

ANTHUS AUSTRALIS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Australian Pipit.

Anthus Australis, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 229.

——— *pallescens*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 229.

Wa^r-ra-joo-lon, Aborigines of the lowlands of Western Australia.

Common Lark of the Colonists.

THE PIPITS, like many other of the Australian birds, are exceedingly perplexing, inasmuch as the specimens from the various colonies differ from each other considerably in size and in the length and form of the hind-claws. A more minute examination and a longer observation of them in a state of nature than my stay in the country afforded, may prove them to comprise several species, though for the present I can only regard them as mere local varieties; whatever the case may be, one thing is certain,—namely that the northern and southern regions of the country are inhabited by Pipits which bear a great resemblance to each other. Every variety of country, from the humid flats and sides of lagoons teeming with luxuriant vegetation to the hot sterile plains, are equally frequented by them; I could not fail to remark, however, that the short-toed and smaller-sized birds were most abundant on the plains. The *Anthus Australis* has all the habits and actions of its European prototype the *Anthus aquaticus*, but is still more bold and showy; its note is also very similar; it seldom flies higher than the tops of the trees, but occasionally mounts perpendicularly in the air, singing all the time; when flushed from the ground it rarely flies to any great distance before it descends again rather abruptly, to the earth, to the branch of a tree, or a small bush.

The nest is a rather deep and compactly formed structure of dried grasses; it is placed in a hole in the ground, sometimes beneath the shelter of a tuft of grass, but more frequently in a clear, open and exposed situation, the top of the nest being level with the surface. The eggs, which are three and sometimes four in number, are of a lengthened form, being eleven lines long by seven and a half lines broad, and are of a greyish white, blotched and freckled with light chestnut-brown and purplish grey, the latter colour appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell.

The breeding-season commences in the early part of September and continues until January, during which season two or three broods are reared.

The stomach is very muscular, and the food consists of insects of various kinds and small seeds.

The sexes are alike in plumage and may be described as follows:—

All the upper surface dark brown, each feather broadly margined with reddish brown; wings and two centre tail-feathers brown, margined with whitish brown; two lateral tail-feathers white, margined on the inner webs with blackish brown and with blackish brown shafts, the remaining tail-feathers blackish brown; stripe over the eye light buff; ear-coverts brown; under surface dull white, washed with buff on the under surface of the shoulder and on the under tail-coverts; the feathers of the breast, flanks and sides of the neck with a streak of dark brown down the centre, these marks being most conspicuous on the sides of the neck and across the upper part of the breast, where they are arranged in the form of a gorget, the points of which proceed upward to the angle of the lower mandible; irides very dark brown; bill and feet fleshy brown.

Freshly moulted individuals differ in having a rich tint of rufous pervading the whole of the upper surface, the breast and flanks.

The figures represent the two sexes of the natural size, from specimens procured in New South Wales.