

ACANTHIZA CHRYSORRHŒA.

Yellow-tailed Acanthiza.

Saxicola chrysorrhœa, Quoy and Gaim., Voy. de l'Astrolabe, p. 198. pl. 10. fig. 2.

Acanthiza chrysorrhœa, Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

Jeé-da, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

THIS well-known species of *Acanthiza* inhabits Van Diemen's Land, Western and Southern Australia and New South Wales, in all of which countries it is a permanent resident. It is generally met with in small companies of from six to ten in number, and is so tame that it may be very closely approached before it will rise, and it then merely flies off to a short distance and alights again; during these short flights the yellow of the rump shows very conspicuously.

It commences breeding very early, and rears at least three broods a year. The nest is somewhat carelessly constructed of leaves, grasses, wool, &c., and is of a domed form, with a small hole for an entrance. It would seem that the same nest is resorted to for several succeeding years; but the most curious feature connected with it is, that a small cup-shaped depression or second nest, as it were, is frequently formed on the top or side of the other, and which is said to be either the roosting-place of the male, or where he may sit in order to be in company with the female during the task of nidification. I have myself found many of these double nests, but have not had opportunities for satisfactorily ascertaining the use of the upper one. The bird very readily resorts to the gardens of the settler, and constructs its curious nest in any low shrub. In Van Diemen's Land one of the trees most frequently selected for the purpose is the prickly *Mimosa*: in Western Australia it is frequently suspended from the overhanging branches of the *Xanthorrhœa*, and in the district of the Upper Hunter upon the apple-trees (*Angophoræ*). The nest varies very much in size, being in some instances considerably larger than the one figured. The eggs are generally of a beautiful uniform flesh-colour, but occasionally they are found sprinkled over with very minute specks of reddish yellow, which in some instances form a zone at the larger end; they are four or five in number, their medium length being nine lines and breadth six lines.

This is one of the species to which the Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) delegates the task of rearing its young. I have several times taken the egg of the cuckoo from the nest of this bird and also the young, in which latter case the parasitical bird was the sole occupant.

The song of the *Acanthiza chrysorrhœa* is extremely pretty, many of its notes closely resembling those of the Goldfinch of Europe (*Carduelis elegans*). Its food consists of small coleopterous and other kinds of insects.

The sexes are alike in plumage, and may be thus described:—

Forehead black, with a spot of white at the tip of each feather; cheeks, throat, and a line from the nostrils over each eye greyish white; chest and under surface yellowish white, passing into light olive-brown on the flanks; upper surface and wings olive-brown; rump and upper tail-coverts bright citron-yellow; base of the tail-feathers white, tinged with yellow; the external margin of the outer feathers and the tips of all brownish grey, the central portion blackish brown; bill and feet blackish brown; irides very light grey.

The Plate represents a nest and a male and female of the natural size.