

SERICORNIS HUMILIS, *Gould.*

Sombre-coloured Sericornis.

Sericornis humilis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 133 ; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS species is very generally dispersed over Van Diemen's Land, and as I have found it on some of the islands in Bass's Straits, it is not improbable that it may also extend its range to the southern coast of the continent of Australia. Ravines, deep glens, water-courses covered with dense herbage and thickly-wooded copses are the situations congenial to the habits of this bird ; those that are most humid or damp being apparently preferred to any other ; consequently, although it is very abundant and its distribution very general, it is a bird that is less seen, and one whose habits are less known than almost any other of the indigenous birds of the island. In many of its actions it closely resembles the Wren (*Troglodytes Europæus*), particularly in its manner of hopping about on the ground, and from stone to stone, with its tail erect in search of insects, upon which it solely subsists ; it also assimilates to the Wren in the form, construction and situation of its nest ; but in the number and colour of its eggs there is much difference. It rarely flies more than a few yards at a time, but secretes itself in the midst of the little thicket in which it has taken up its abode. There is little difficulty in finding the nest ; for although it is in general very artfully concealed among the herbage at the base of a tree, on the edge of a shelving bank, or among the thick tangle of the scrub, yet by attentively watching the old birds for a short time, they will soon indicate by their actions the immediate locality of the nest. The male constantly cheers his mate with a pretty lively song, which, although neither loud nor voluminous, serves to give life to its secluded abode, which in many instances is in the depths of the forests, where few sounds are heard except the monotonous note of the Honey-sucker, and the perpetual rippling of the rivulet as it steals over the stony bed of the gully. It is sometimes seen, particularly towards evening, to leave its lurking-place and seek any little open part or glade in the forest, doubtless attracted to such situations in search of food.

The sexes present no difference whatever in the colouring of the plumage, consequently dissection is necessary to distinguish them.

The nest is of rather a large size and of a domed form, outwardly composed of any coarse materials at hand, such as leaves, tufts of grass, roots, &c., the interior being formed of similar substances, but of a finer kind, and the whole carefully lined with feathers. The eggs, which are large for the size of the bird, are three in number, of a reddish white, curiously freckled and marked all over with reddish brown, particularly at the larger end, where the markings assume the form of a zone ; they are ten and a half lines long by eight lines broad.

Lores blackish brown, above which an obscure stripe of white ; crown of the head and all the upper surface, wings and tail dark olive-brown with a tinge of red, which becomes more conspicuous on the rump and tail-feathers ; spurious wing blackish brown, each feather margined with white ; throat greyish white, spotted with blackish brown ; chest and centre of the abdomen brownish yellow, the former singularly but more obscurely spotted than the throat ; flanks chestnut-brown ; bill blackish brown ; legs dark brown ; irides straw-yellow.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.