

SERICORNIS CITREOGULARIS, *Gould.*

Yellow-throated Sericornis.

Sericornis citreogularis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 133; and in Synopsis of the Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS is the largest and most attractive species of the genus yet discovered, and so far as I am aware, its habitat is restricted to the south-eastern portions of Australia, where it dwells exclusively in the districts known by the name of "brushes." I personally observed it in those of Illawarra, and of the Hunter, and in the cedar brushes of the Liverpool range. It frequents the most retired parts of the forest, living in gullies and under the canopy of lofty trees, hopping about among the stems of the tree-fern, fallen trunks of patriarchal gums and moss-covered stones. It rarely flies, and when disturbed, seeks seclusion and safety by hopping away among the underwood. Its food, which consists of insects of various kinds, is obtained on the ground or among the trunks of the prostrate trees, over which and the large stones it passes with much ease and agility.

The sexes are very similar in colour, but the female may at all times be distinguished by her smaller size and the less strongly contrasted tints of her plumage, particularly in the hue of the streak running through the eye and extending over the ear-coverts, which is neither so dark nor so broad as in the male.

One of the most interesting points connected with the history of this species is the situations chosen for its nest. All those who have rambled in the Australian forests must have observed, that in their more dense and humid parts an atmosphere peculiarly adapted for the rapid and abundant growth of mosses of various kinds is generated, and that these mosses not only grow upon the trunks of decayed trees, but are often accumulated in large masses at the extremities of the drooping branches; these masses often become of sufficient size to admit of the bird constructing a nest in the centre of them with so much art that it is impossible to distinguish it from any of the other pendulous masses in the vicinity. These bunches are frequently a yard in length, and in some instances hang so near the ground as to strike the head of the explorer during his rambles; in others they are placed high up upon the trees, but only in such parts of the forest where there is an open space entirely shaded by overhanging foliage: as will be readily conceived, in whatever situations they are met with, they at all times form a remarkable and conspicuous feature in the landscape. Although the nest is constantly disturbed by the wind and liable to be shaken when the tree is disturbed, so secure does the inmate consider itself from danger or intrusion of any kind, that I have frequently captured the female while sitting on her eggs, a feat that may always be accomplished by carefully placing the hand over the entrance; that is, if it can be detected, to effect which no slight degree of close prying and examination is necessary.

The nest is formed of the inner bark of trees, intermingled with green moss, which soon vegetates; sometimes dried grasses and fibrous roots form part of the materials of which it is composed, and it is warmly lined with feathers. The eggs, which are three in number and much elongated in form, vary considerably in colour, the most constant tint being a clove-brown freckled over the larger end with dark umber-brown, frequently assuming the form of a complete band or zone: their medium length is one inch, and their breadth eight lines.

Lores, circle around the eye, and the ear-coverts deep black; a conspicuous line of yellowish white above and for some distance beyond the eye; crown of the head, and all the upper surface, secondaries, wing-coverts and tail reddish brown, becoming more rufous on the upper tail-coverts and tail; outer edges of the primaries olive; spurious wing blackish brown; throat yellow; chest and flanks olive-brown; centre of the abdomen white; bill brownish black; irides reddish brown; legs purplish flesh-colour, in some specimens flesh-white.

The figures represent the two sexes of the natural size.