

## PSOPHODES CREPITANS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

### Coach-whip Bird.

*Muscicapa crepitans*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. li.

*Coach-whip Flycatcher*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 222.

*Coach-whip Honey-eater*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 187.

*Psophodes crepitans*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 329.

*Djou*, Aborigines of New South Wales.

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THIS bird, so renowned for the singularity of its note, is very abundant in many parts of New South Wales, to which portion of the Australian continent it appears to be confined, as I have never met with it in collections from any other part of the country. It is to be found only in dense brushes, such as those at Maitland, Manning, Illawarra, and the cedar brushes of the Liverpool range; in fact, the localities that are suitable to the *Menura* and the Wattled Talegalla, are congenial to the habits of the Coach-whip Bird, which in some degree assimilate to those of the former; and the loud full note of this bird, ending sharply like the cracking of a whip, with which the woods are constantly reverberating, appeared to me, although very dissimilar, to be analogous to the peculiar call of the *Menura*; and I would further remark that a great resemblance is observable in the structure of the two birds.

The Coach-whip Bird is a shy and recluse species, for although its full notes indicate its presence, it rarely exposes itself to view, but generally keeps in the midst of the densest foliage and among the thickest climbing plants, frequenting alike those that have intertwined themselves with the branches of the tallest shrubs, and those that form almost impenetrable masses near the ground, and through which it threads its way with the utmost ease. In these arboreal habits it less resembles *Menura* than in other parts of its economy. It is extremely animated and sprightly in all its actions, raising its crest and spreading its tail in the most elegant manner, generally carrying this organ slightly raised, but never elevating it in the grotesque style of the Blue Wrens (*Maluri*). These actions become even more animated during the spring, when the males may often be seen chasing each other, frequently stopping to pour out their notes with great volubility, making the brushes ring for a considerable distance around them, and displaying themselves to the greatest advantage.

The food consists of insects of various kinds, obtained almost entirely from the ground, and sought for by scratching up the leaves and turning over the small stones, precisely after the manner of the *Menura*.

Independently of its peculiar whistle, which must be heard to be understood, as it is impossible to convey an idea of it by words, it possesses a low inward song of considerable melody.

The rounded form of the wings and graduated tail, as well as the softness of the feathers of the back, have induced some authors to consider it to be allied to the Bush Shrikes of America (*Thamnophili*); but the structure of its bill, which is so essentially different, being totally devoid of the notch on both the mandibles, must have been overlooked, and in no one of its habits or actions does it assimilate to those birds.

The sexes are much alike in colour, but may be readily distinguished by the more obscure plumage, and lesser size of the female. The young of the first year are of a much browner hue, a character of plumage that soon gives place to the adult livery. Of its nidification I regret to say I know nothing, although I paid great attention to the subject myself, and offered rewards for its nest and eggs, and for any information respecting them.

The male has the head, ear-coverts, chin and breast black; a large patch of white on each side of the neck, all the upper surface, wings, flanks, and base of the tail-feathers olive-green; the remaining portion of the tail-feathers black, the three lateral feathers on each side tipped with white; under surface olive-brown, some of the feathers on the centre of the abdomen tipped with white, and forming a conspicuous irregular patch; irides brownish red; bill, inside and out, and base of the tongue black; feet reddish brown.

The Plate represents the male and female of the natural size, on the branch of a plant growing abundantly in the brushes of the Hunter, with the scientific name of which I am not acquainted, but which is called the Cherry by the colonists.