

PIEZORHYNCHUS NITIDUS, *Gould.*

Shining Flycatcher.

Piezorhynchus nitidus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VIII. p. 171.
Ung-bur-ka, Aborigines of Port Essington.

I HERE give a representation of a Flycatcher, whose habitat, so far as we know, is restricted to the northern portions of Australia. It is by no means scarce at Port Essington, but, from the extreme shyness of its disposition and the situations it inhabits, it is seldom seen; specimens in fact are not procured without considerable trouble and difficulty. As I have not myself seen the bird in its native haunts, I shall transcribe, with as little alteration as possible, Mr. Gilbert's notes respecting it:—"Inhabits the densest mangroves and thickets, and is usually seen creeping about close to the ground among the fallen trees in the swamps, at which time it utters a note so closely resembling the croak of a frog, that it might easily be mistaken for the voice of that animal; this peculiar note would seem to be only emitted while the bird is feeding on the ground; for when it occasionally mounts to the higher branches of the trees it utters a rather pleasing succession of sounds resembling *twit-te-twite*; on the slightest disturbance it immediately descends again to the underwood and recommences its frog-like note. The nest is either built among the mangroves, or on the verge of a thicket near an open spot. One that I found among the mangroves was built on a seedling-tree not more than three feet from the ground; another was on a branch overhanging a small running stream within reach of the hand; while a third, constructed on the branches of the trees bordering a clear space in the centre of a dense thicket, was at least twenty feet high. The nest at all times so closely resembles the surrounding branches, that it is very difficult to detect unless the birds are very closely watched; in some instances it looks so like an excrescence of the tree, and in others is so deeply seated in the fork whereon it is placed, that it can only be discovered when the bird is sitting upon it. The nest is about two inches and a half in height and three and a quarter in diameter, is of a cup-shaped form, with the rim brought to a sharp edge, and is outwardly composed of the stringy bark of an *Eucalyptus* bound together on the outside with vegetable fibres, among which in some instances cobwebs are mixed: all over the outside of the nest small pieces of bark resembling portions of lichens are attached, some of them hanging by a single thread and moving about with every breath of air; the internal surface is lined with a strong wiry thread-like fibrous root, whereby the whole structure is rendered nearly as firm as if it were bound with wire."

The eggs, which are two in number, are ten lines long and seven lines broad, of a bluish white, blotched and spotted all over with olive and greyish brown, the spots of the latter hue being less numerous and more obscure; the spots inclining towards the form of a zone at the larger end.

The food consists of insects of various kinds.

The male has the whole of the plumage rich deep glossy greenish black; irides dark brown; bill greyish blue at the base, black at the tip; tarsi greenish grey.

The female has the top and sides of the head and the back of the neck rich deep glossy greenish black; the remainder of the upper surface, wings and tail rusty brown; and the whole of the under surface white.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.