

OREOICA GUTTURALIS, Gould.

Crested Oreoica.

Falcunculus gutturalis, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 212.

Crested Thrush, Lewin, Birds of New Holl., pl. 9. fem.

Oreoica gutturalis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 151; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.—
G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit., p. 48.

Bo-kürn-bo-kürn, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

Bell-bird, Colonists of Swan River.

THIS very singular bird possesses an extremely wide range of habitat, being dispersed over the whole of the southern portion of Australia from east to west. It has not yet been discovered in Van Diemen's Land or in any of the islands in Bass's Straits, neither has the extent of its range northwards yet been ascertained. It is, I believe, everywhere a stationary species, but although its distribution is so general, it is nowhere very plentiful. From what I observed of it, it appeared to give a decided preference to the naked sterile crowns of hills and open bare glades in the forests, and I should say that its presence is indicative of a poor and bad land. It resorts much to the ground, over the surface of which it hops with great quickness, often in small companies of from three to six in number. When flushed it flies but a short distance, generally to a large horizontal branch of a neighbouring *Eucalyptus*, along which it passes in a succession of quick hops, similar to those of the Common Sparrow of Europe. It is very animated in many of its actions, particularly the male, whose erected crest and white face, relieved by the beautiful orange-colour of the eye, gives it a very sprightly appearance. The female, on the other hand, being nearly uniform in colour, having the eye hazel and the crest less developed, is by no means so attractive. I regret much that it is not in my power to convey an idea of the note uttered by this bird, which is singular in the extreme; besides which it is a perfect ventriloquist, its peculiar, mournful, piping whistle appearing to be at a considerable distance, while the bird is perched on a large branch of a neighbouring tree. To aid my recollections I find the following remarks in my note-book:—"Note, a very peculiar piping whistle, sounding like *weet-weet-weet-weet-oo*, the last syllable fully drawn out and very melodious." In Western Australia, where the real Bell-bird is never found, this species has had that appellation given to it,—a term which must appear ill-applied to those who have heard the note of the true Bell-bird of the brushes of New South Wales, whose tinkling sound so nearly resembles that of a distant sheep-bell as occasionally to deceive the ears of a practised shepherd. My assistant Mr. Gilbert having also noted down to the best of his power the singular note of this species, I give it in his own words, but neither his description nor my own can convey anything like an accurate idea of it; notes of birds, in fact, are not to be described,—they must be heard to be understood. "The most singular feature," says Mr. Gilbert, "connected with this bird is, that it is a perfect ventriloquist. At first its note commences in so low a tone that it sounds as if at a considerable distance, and then gradually increases in volume until it appears over the head of the wondering hearer, the bird that utters it being all the while on the dead part of a tree, perhaps not more than three or four yards distant; its motionless attitude rendering its discovery very difficult. It has two kinds of song, the most usual of which is a running succession of notes, or two notes repeated together rather slowly, followed by a repetition three times rather quickly, the last note resembling the sound of a bell from its ringing tone; the other song is pretty nearly the same, only that it concludes with a sudden and peculiar fall of two notes."

It flies in heavy undulating sweeps, generally so near the ground that it seems as if it would scarcely take the trouble to rise above the scrub or small trees that may lie in its course.

In Western Australia its nest is formed of strings of bark, lined with a few fine dried grasses, and is generally placed in a *Xanthorrea* or grass-tree, either in the upper part of the grass or rush above, or in the fork of the trunk, and is of a deep cup-shaped form. It breeds in October, and generally lays three eggs, which vary much in colour; the ground-tint being bluish white, in some instances marked all over with minute spots of ink-black, in others with long zigzag lines and blotches of the same hue. In some these