

FALCUNCULUS FRONTATUS, Vieill.

Frontal Shrike-Tit.

Lanius frontatus, Lath. Ind. Orn., p. xviii.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. vii. p. 312.—Temm. Man., Part I. p. lix.—Ib. Pl. Col., pl. 77.

Frontal Shrike, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 75, pl. 122.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 72, pl. xx.

Falcunculus frontatus, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. i. pl. 138.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 212.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, p. 36.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 372.

Falcunculus flavigulus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 144; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV., young?

I HAD many opportunities of observing this bird, both in New South Wales and South Australia, over both of which countries it is very generally although not numerously dispersed. It does not inhabit Western Australia, neither have I as yet received it from the north coast. It alike inhabits the thick brushes as well as the trees of the open plains. Its chief food is insects, which are either obtained among the foliage or under the bark of the larger branches and trunks of the trees; in procuring these it displays great dexterity, stripping off the bark in the most determined manner, for which purpose its powerful bill is admirably adapted.

It is very animated and sprightly in its actions, and in many of its habits bears a striking resemblance to the Tits, particularly in the manner in which it clings to and climbs among the branches in search of food. While thus employed it frequently erects its crest and assumes many pert and lively positions: no bird of its size with which I am acquainted possesses greater strength in its mandibles, or is capable of inflicting severer wounds, as I experienced on handling one I had previously winged, and which fastened on my hand in the most ferocious manner.

As far as I am aware, the *Falcunculus frontatus* is not distinguished by any powers of song, merely uttering a few low piping notes.

I could neither succeed in procuring the nest of this species nor obtain any authentic information respecting its nidification.

The stomachs of the specimens I dissected were filled with the larvæ of insects and berries.

The male has immediately above the bill a narrow band of white, from which, down the centre of the head, is a broad stripe of black feathers forming a crest; sides of the face and head white, divided by a line of black which passes through the eye to the nape; back, shoulders and wing-coverts olive; primaries and secondaries blackish brown broadly margined with grey; tail blackish brown broadly margined with grey, especially on the two centre feathers; two outer tail-feathers and tips of the remainder white, the white diminishing on each feather as it approaches the centre of the tail; throat black; all the under surface bright yellow; irides reddish brown; bill black; legs and feet bluish grey.

The sexes may at all times be distinguished from each other by the smaller size of the female, and by the colouring of the throat being green instead of black; by the irides being darker and the feet bluish lead-colour.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size, on a branch of a shrub-like tree which I gathered in the district of Illawarra, but of which I have not been able to obtain the name.