

GYMNORHINA ORGANICUM, *Gould.*

Tasmanian Crow-Shrike.

Cracticus hypoleucus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. p. 106; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I. Organ-Bird and White Magpie of the Colonists.

THIS animated and elegant bird is a native of Van Diemen's Land, and appears to be very local in its habitat, for while it is never found below Austin's Ferry on the southern bank of the river Derwent, it is very plentiful on the opposite side and in the interior of the country, particularly on the salt-pan plains, which would be dreary indeed were they not enlivened by the presence of this amusing bird, the Miners (*Myzanthæ*), and the Rose Hill Parrakeet. It is also to be met with in all the open parts of the country, in small troops of from six to twelve or more in number; but I did not observe it on the banks of the Tamar, and it certainly does not inhabit Flinders' Island. It runs, and occasionally hops, over the surface with great quickness, but flies rather slowly, and upon alighting on a branch raises and closes one wing several times in quick succession, and in a very peculiar manner. When on the plains it utters a loud ringing call, but when perched on the dead branches of the trees soon after day-break, it pours forth a succession of notes of the strangest description that can be imagined, much resembling the sounds of a hand-organ out of tune, which has obtained for it the colonial name of the Organ-Bird. It is very easily tamed; and as it possesses the power of imitation in an extraordinary degree, it may be readily taught to whistle various tunes as well as to articulate words; it consequently soon becomes a most amusing as well as ornamental bird for the aviary or cage. The stomach is very muscular, and the food consists of insects of various kinds, grubs, caterpillars, &c., which are procured on the ground.

A nest I found was placed among the topmost branches of a high gum-tree, was round, cup-shaped, and outwardly constructed of sticks interspersed with strips of bark, short grasses, and tufts of a species of swamp grass, to which succeeded an internal lining of coarse grass, which again was lined with the inner bark of the stringy bark-tree, sheep's wool and a few feathers, felted together and forming a dense and warm receptacle for the eggs; it was about ten inches in diameter, and about four or five inches in depth.

The eggs were four in number, of a lengthened form with a ground-colour of greenish ashy grey, spotted and blotched, particularly at the larger end, with umber-brown and bluish grey, the latter colour appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; they were one inch and five lines long by one inch broad. The young assume the adult livery from the nest, and appear to keep in company of the parent birds during the first ten months of their existence.

The male has the crown of the head, cheeks, throat, all the under surface, scapularies, primaries and tips of the tail jet-black; nape of the neck, back, upper and under tail-coverts, and base of the tail-feathers white; bill dark lead-colour at the base, passing into black at the tip; legs black; irides bright hazel.

The female differs in having the nape of the neck and back grey, and the primaries and tips of the tail-feathers brownish black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.