

GYMNORHINA TIBICEN.

Piping Crow-Shrike.

Coracias Tibicen, Lath. Ind. Orn., Supp., xxvii.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. vii. p. 405.

Barita Tibicen, Temm. Man., part i. p. li.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 345.

Piping Roller, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 86. no. 23.

Cracticus Tibicen, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 260.—Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I.

Gymnorhina Tibicen, G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit. p. 50.

Ca-ruck, Aborigines of New South Wales.

THIS species is universally diffused over the colony of New South Wales, to which part of the Australian continent I believe its habitat to be confined. It is true that a bird of this genus inhabits the neighbourhood of Swan River, whose size and style of plumage is very similar, but which I have little doubt will prove to be distinct. In fact, from what we see in other instances, it is natural to expect that there would be a species of this genus on the western as well as on the eastern side of the country, and that they would, as representatives of each other, be very nearly allied; I shall therefore consider the habitat of the present bird to be restricted to New South Wales until I have further proofs to the contrary.

The *Gymnorhina Tibicen* is a bold and showy bird, which, when not harassed and driven away, greatly enlivens and ornaments the lawns and gardens of the colonists by its presence, and with the slightest protection from molestation becomes so tame and familiar that it approaches close to their dwellings, and perches round them and the stock yards in small families of from six to ten in number. Nor is its morning carol less amusing and attractive than its pied and strongly contrasted plumage is pleasing to the eye. To describe the notes of this bird is beyond the power of my pen, and it is a source of regret to myself that my readers cannot, as I have done, listen to them in their native wilds, or that the bird is not introduced into this country in sufficient numbers for it to become generally known; a more amusing and easily-kept denizen for the aviary could not be selected. As it dwells in New South Wales all the year round, breeds upon the trees bordering the cleared lands, and constructs a nest as large and conspicuous as that of the Crow of our own island, there can be no difficulty in procuring as many young ones as might be desired; and I trust, therefore, that whenever opportunities occur for sending living examples to England they will not be neglected.

Cleared lands, open flats and plains skirted by belts of trees are its favourite localities, hence the interior of the country is more favourable to its habits than the neighbourhood of the coast.

It lives almost entirely on insects, which are generally procured on the ground, and the number of locusts and grasshoppers it devours is immense. In captivity it subsists upon animal food of almost every kind, and that berries and fruits would be equally acceptable I have but little doubt.

The breeding-season commences in August and lasts until January, during which period two broods are generally reared by each pair of birds. The nest is round, deep and open, composed outwardly of sticks, leaves, wool, &c., and lined with any finer materials that may be at hand. The eggs are either three or four in number; their colour and size I regret to say I cannot give, having unfortunately neglected to procure them while in New South Wales. Of two other and much rarer species I possess the eggs; and although I might from analogy proceed to describe those of the present bird from them, I refrain from so doing.

The young assume the plumage of the adult from the nest, and no change takes place from age or season.

Crown of the head, cheeks, throat, back, all the under surface, scapularies, secondaries, primaries and tips of the tail-feathers black; wing-coverts, nape of the neck, upper and under tail-coverts, and base of the tail-feathers white; bill bluish ash-colour at the base, passing into black at the tip; irides rich reddish hazel; legs black.

The Plate represents the male and female, with the nest, rather less than the natural size.