

## STREPERA ARGUTA, Gould.

### Hill Crow-Shrike.

*Strepera arguta*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part XIV. p. 19.

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THE *Strepera arguta* is abundantly dispersed over Van Diemen's Land, but is more numerous in the central parts of the island than in the districts adjacent to the coast; it also inhabits South Australia, in which country it is more scarce, and all the specimens I have seen are rather smaller in size. I have never seen it in any part of New South Wales that I have visited, neither have specimens occurred in the numerous collections from the west coast that have come under my notice. It is the largest, the boldest and the most animated species of the genus yet discovered. If not strictly gregarious, it is often seen in small companies of from four to ten, and during the months of winter even a greater number are to be seen congregated together. The districts most suited to its habits are open glades in the forest and thinly-timbered hills: although it readily perches on the trees, its natural resort is the ground, for which its form is admirably adapted, and over which it passes with amazing rapidity, either in a succession of leaps or by running. Fruits being but sparingly diffused over Australia, insects necessarily constitute almost its sole food, and of these nearly every order inhabiting the surface of the ground forms part of its diet. It devours grasshoppers with great avidity, and as these insects are ever most abundant, the one would appear to be formed for the sustenance of the other.

Its note is a loud ringing and very peculiar sound, somewhat resembling the words *clink, clink*, several times repeated, and strongly reminded me of the distant sound of the strokes on a blacksmith's anvil; and hence the term *arguta* appeared to me to be an appropriate specific appellation for this new species.

All the nests I found of this species either contained young birds or were without eggs; I am consequently unable to give their size and colour. The nest, which is of a large size, is generally placed on a horizontal branch of a low tree; it is round, deep and cup-shaped, outwardly formed of sticks and lined with fibrous roots and other fine materials.

The sexes present no external difference whatever, neither is there much difference in size; the young are black from the nest, except that the tertiary feathers are strongly tipped with white, a character never I believe thrown off in adult age.

All the plumage brownish black, becoming much browner on the tips of the wing-feathers, and of a grey tint on the abdomen; base of the inner webs of the primaries and secondaries, the under tail-coverts and the apical third of the inner webs of the tail-feathers white; irides orange-yellow; bill and feet black; corner of the mouth yellow.

The Plate represents the bird about four-fifths of the size of life.