

ARTAMUS MINOR, Vieill.

Little Wood Swallow.

Artamus minor, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xvii. p. 298.—Ib. Ency. Méth., Part II. p. 759.

Ocypterus fuscatus, Valenc. Mém. du Mus. d'Hist. Nat., tom. vi. p. 24. t. 9. fig. 1.

Leptopteryx minor, Wagl. Syst. Av., sp. 6.

Ocypterus minor, Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I. fig. 1.

IN its structure and in the disposition of the markings of its plumage, this species offers a greater resemblance to the *Artamus sordidus* than to any other member of the group; the habits of the two species are also very similar; if any difference exists, it is that the present bird is still more aërial, a circumstance indicated by the more feeble form of the foot, and the equal, if not greater, development of the wing. During fine weather, and even in the hottest part of the day, it floats about in the air in the most easy and graceful manner, performing in the course of its evolutions many beautiful curves and circles, without the least apparent motion of the wings, whose silvery whiteness as seen from beneath, together with the snowy tips of its wide-spread tail, offer a strong contrast to the dark colouring of the other parts of its plumage.

I found it abundant on the Lower Namoi, particularly on the plains thinly studded with the *Acacia pendula* and other low trees in the neighbourhood of Gummel-Gummel, where it had evidently been breeding, as I observed numerous young ones, whose primaries were not sufficiently developed to admit of their performing a migration of any distance; besides which, they were constantly being fed by the parents, who were hawking about in the air over and around the trees, while the young were quietly perched on some dead twig, as represented in the accompanying Plate, where two adults and three young are figured, in the manner in which they are seen huddled together in a state of nature.

I have not yet heard of this species having been seen within the prescribed limits of the colony of New South Wales, neither is it a native of Southern or Western Australia.

I have received two specimens from Port Essington, and I believe the examples in the Paris Museum were from Timor, which proves that it has a wide range northwards of the Namoi; and I shall not be surprised if future research should ascertain it to be very generally distributed over the interior of the Australian continent, not as a summer visitant only, but as a permanent resident.

The sexes are alike in plumage, but the young differ considerably, as shown in the Plate, a reference to which will give a more correct idea of their appearance and markings than any description.

The whole of the head, back, and abdomen chocolate-brown; wings, rump, and under tail-coverts bluish black; tail deep bluish black, all the feathers except the two outer and two middle ones tipped with white; bill beautiful violet-blue at the base, darker at the tip; irides and feet nearly black.

The figures are of the natural size.