

GLYCIPHILA SUBFASCIATA, Ramsay.

Dusky Honey-eater.

Glyciphila subfasciata, Ramsay, P. Z. S. 1868, p. 385; 1875, p. 594.

In the present work, which includes the most gorgeous of all birds (I mean the Birds of Paradise and their allies), we shall also figure some very plain-coloured species; but it will in most cases be found that, without brilliancy of plumage to attract the eye, they yet possess some marked feature in their economy which arouses our interest. The present species is a case in point; for it is perhaps the plainest of all the Honey-eaters, many of which are very beautiful birds; but yet we find, from Mr. Ramsay's observations, that it stands unique among that large group for its mode of nest-building. I shall, however, allow him to tell the history of the species in his own words, merely premising that the following notes comprise all that has been as yet discovered about the species. Mr. Ramsay observes:—

“This species, although possessing nothing in its sombre plumage to recommend it, is certainly very interesting on account of its peculiarly shaped nest, being the only one of the Australian Meliphaginæ that I have met with which constructs a dome-shaped nest. It is a neat structure, composed of strips of bark, spiders' webs, and grass, and lined with fine grasses &c. The opening at the side is rather large; but the nest itself is rather deep, being about 4 inches long, and 2½ to 3 inches wide. The eggs I did not obtain; but one taken from the oviduct of a bird is 0·75 inch in length and 0·5 in breadth, pure white, with a few dots of black sprinkled over the larger end.

“The nests were invariably placed among the drooping branches of a species of *Acacia*, always overhanging some creek or running water. All the nests I found were so situated; and my young friend Master I. Sheridan of Cardwell, who has paid considerable attention to objects of natural history, assures me that he has never found them otherwise; and the usual number of eggs for a sitting are two, and frequently without any black dots on the surface. Their note is a sharp, shrill, monotonous cry, oft repeated at intervals; iris reddish brown.”

The following is the original description of the species, extracted from Mr. Ramsay's paper:—

Female.—Total length 4·8 inches; bill, from the angle of the mouth 0·6, from forehead 0·5, width at base 0·2, across nostrils 0·1; wing, from flexure, 2·5; tail 2; tarsi 0·65. The whole of the upper surface, sides of the head, and neck glossy brown, a short oblique stripe under the eye white, feathers on the crown of the head centred with dark brown. The whole of the under surface and the extreme tips of the ear-coverts silvery white. The chest faintly barred with lines of brown, which join the sides of the neck above the shoulders; flanks and under coverts of wings tinged with brown; under surface of the wing dark brown, the inner margins of the feathers whitish brown; bill and legs reddish horn-brown.”

The sexes differ considerably in size, while in colour there is no difference.

Besides having seen the type specimen in Mr. Ramsay's collection, I have specimens of this bird in my own cabinet, from which the figures in the accompanying Plate are drawn.