

MELIRRHOPHETES BATESI, Sharpe.

Bates's Honey-eater.

Melirrhophetes batesi, Sharpe, Nature, 1886, p. 340.

THE discovery of a species of the genus *Melirrhophetes* in Southern New Guinea is of great interest, as hitherto the genus has been supposed to be confined to the north-western portion of that island. It is being gradually proved, however, that these mountainous faunæ of the north-west and south-east of New Guinea are similar in character, and that either the same species occur throughout the island, or else representative species of the same genus are discovered. In the present instance the *Melirrhophetes* of the Astrolabe Mountains is closely allied to *M. ochromelas* of Meyer, from the Arfak Mountains; but it is evidently distinct, having a tuft of tawny feathers above and below the bare space of the eye, nor does it seem to have the brown shade behind the ear-coverts which is represented in our Plate of *M. ochromelas*, and was drawn from the type specimen. I am not aware of the existence of any example of the last-named species in this country, so we have only had the Plate to compare with, but this leaves little doubt of the distinctness of *M. batesi*.

No particulars accompanied the single specimen sent by Mr. Forbes, who obtained it in the Sogeri district of the Astrolabe range in Southern New Guinea. At his request we have named it after Mr. H. W. Bates, who, a traveller himself, knows how to sympathise with the difficulties which surround the absent explorer.

The following is a description of the typical specimens:—

Adult. General colour above blackish, the mantle and upper back tipped with white or pale tawny buff edges to the feathers; the lower back and rump uniform dark brown; scapulars and lesser wing-coverts blackish with a slight wash of olive, a little more distinct on the median series; the greater and primary-coverts, as well as the quills, blackish brown, edged with olive-yellow, more distinct on the secondaries; bastard-wing dusky blackish; primaries tipped with pale fulvous, extending a little way down the outer web; upper tail-coverts dark brown, with a slight wash of olive; tail-feathers dark brown, edged externally with greenish olive; crown of head black, the occiput and nape browner, with a faint tinge of olive, the hind neck, again, rather blacker; lores black; region of the eye bare, with a band of pale tawny feathers on the sides of the crown along the eye; ear-coverts and feathers below the eye, as well as the cheeks, black, the ear-coverts and hinder cheeks slightly washed with grey, and having a small tuft of tawny feathers behind the former; throat and under surface of body blackish brown, with narrow shaft-lines of ashy white on the breast-feathers, the lower breast and abdomen browner and more sooty; sides of body, flanks, and thighs like the breast; under tail-coverts dusky brown, broadly edged with tawny or yellowish buff; under wing-coverts and axillaries blackish, the latter tipped with yellowish buff; quills below blackish, the primaries with pale tips, the base of the inner webs also pale tawny. Total length 9 inches, culmen 1·3, wing 4·8, tail 4·1, tarsus 1·05.

The figures in the Plate are drawn from the specimen described above, and represent the species of the natural size.

[R. B. S.]