

SERICORNIS MINIMUS, *Gould.*

Little Sericornis.

Sericornis minimus, Gould, MS.

It may, I think, be fairly stated that this particular genus is represented in every portion of Australia: from the outlying Houtmans Abrolhas on the west coast to the brushes of the Clarence on the east, from Tasmania in the south to Cape York in the extreme north, one or another species has already been discovered. That a genus of birds so widely spread over the continent of Australia should not be found in New Guinea is very unlikely; to this time, however, it has not turned up in the scanty collections that have been formed in that country. The nearest allies of this pretty little bird are the *Sericornis frontalis* of the eastern brushes of New South Wales, and the *Sericornis levigaster* of the northern portion of Australia. From the former it differs in the markings of the face and eye-stripes, from the latter in the total absence of any marks on the tips of the tail-feathers. Nothing has yet been recorded respecting the habits and economy of this species; but, judging from the sleek and silky texture of its feathers, it is an inhabitant of humid sterile places, among grasses and mossy stones, in the wilder portion of the forest.

On reference to the accompanying Plate it will be seen that the male, although generally of the same appearance as *S. frontalis*, has the lores and markings of the face of a different form—a feature I know to be constant; for I have received this bird in considerable numbers from collectors in Northern Queensland and the Cape-York district. I have stated in my history of *S. frontalis* that that bird was the smallest species of the genus; the present is but a trifle larger.

With regard to the reference to the specific name of *minimus*, given by me to this bird some years ago, I regret that I cannot find it at the time of going to press.

The figure may be thus described:—

Male.—Lores black, surmounted in front with a spot of white, a white mark also occupies the hinder portion of both eye-lashes; all the upper surface brown, increasing to rufous on the rump; secondaries and lesser wing-coverts black, with white edges; throat white, passing into yellowish white on the under surface generally; bill light brown, legs fleshy.

The *female* has the lores brown, with the rest of the markings on the face as in the male.

Total length $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches, wing $2\frac{3}{8}$, bill $\frac{5}{8}$, tail $1\frac{1}{2}$, tarsus $\frac{7}{8}$.

The Plate represents both sexes, of the natural size.