RHIPIDURA DRYAS, Gould.

TO DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTY OF

Wood-Fantail.

Rhipidura dryas, Gould, Birds of Australia, 8vo edition, vol. i. page 242.

The members of the genus of Flycatchers called *Rhipidura* are so universally dispersed over Australia, New Guinea, the Philippines, and India that it would be difficult to name either of these countries where one or other of the members are not to be found. To enter into the specific characters of all the known species would be out of the question in a work like the 'Birds of Australia;' this can only be properly and effectively done by the monographist; suffice it to say that the present bird, notwithstanding what I have stated in my 'Introduction to the Birds of Australia,' is very distinct from any other species I have ever met with; and a comparison of the accompanying Plate with figures of its allies will at once convince ornithologists that this is the case.

The following is extracted from my 'Handbook to the Birds of Australia,' at the page quoted above.

"This bird differs from R. rufifrons in being of a smaller size, in its dark-grey tail-feathers being more largely tipped with white, and merely fringed with rufous at the base only, in the breast being white, crossed by a distinct band of black, and devoid of the dark spotted markings seen on the chest of its ally.

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

R. dryas inhabits the north-western portion of Australia, where it appears to be as common as R. rufifrons is in the south-eastern. I had several specimens, all of which bore a general resemblance to each other.

The majority of these little birds dwell in the utmost recesses of the forest; there they fan out their large tails, and make their displays without ever being seen, unless man in his wanderings and investigations should intrude upon their privacy. In the capture of their insect prey these tiny-billed gnat-catchers exhibit themselves in many graceful attitudes, sometimes running along the branches of trees, or over large stones, or restlessly darting here and there after *Aphidii* and other minute flies. When they are by nature prompted to breed, they construct without exception the neatest and most charming of nests, the grassy materials with which the walls are formed being woven together with the webs of the most minute spiders. In this frail structure, about the size of an egg-cup, two beautifully speckled eggs are deposited.

There is no outward difference between the sexes.

The Plate represents two individuals of the size of life.