

CHLAMYDODERA OCCIPITALIS, Gould.

Large-frilled Bower-bird.

Chlamyodera occipitalis, Gould, Annals and Mag. Nat. Hist. 4th series, vol. xvi. p. 429 (1875).

IN describing the present species in 1875, I wrote as follows:—"Of all the acts performed by birds, that of building themselves beautiful bowers, variously decorated with shells, bleached bones, glittering stones, and gaudily coloured feathers, must ever be ranked amongst the most interesting traits in connexion with ornithology. At present the only known country in which these playing-places or halls of assembly are constructed is Australia. Whoever may have the good fortune to lift up the curtain which separates New Guinea from other countries, may probably find others." Not four years have yet elapsed since those words were penned; and they already appear to have been prophetic. In that short space of time how much has been done to unravel the mysteries of the avifauna of New Guinea, resulting in no small addition to our knowledge of the Bower-birds! The south-eastern part of that great island has been ransacked by English, Italians, and Dutch; and these collectors have made us acquainted with the birds which are met with in that newly explored country. Then, again, in the north-western portion of the island, we owe to the energies of the distinguished Italian traveller, Dr. Beccari, the discovery of *Amblyornis inornata*, whose capabilities in bower-building and decoration seem to eclipse those of any of the other species.

The male of the present bird (*Chlamyodera occipitalis*) is one of the novelties I have but lately received. It is true I had in my collection a female from some unknown locality, which always seemed to me to differ from those of all the other species I had seen; but I hesitated to describe it, and it was not till a year or so previous to 1875 that the receipt of the fine male bird which is figured in the accompanying Plate enabled me to publish its specific characters. That its true habitat was Northern Queensland I was pretty certain; and in confirmation of this opinion, Mr. Janson, a highly respectable person and dealer in natural-history specimens, from whom I purchased the skin, kindly writes to me as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—On reference to my books I find that you purchased the Bower-bird of me on the 20th of January, 1872; and, referring to my old letters, I see that it formed part of a collection made by Mr. Jardine at Port Albany, North Australia.

"Yours truly and respectfully,

"EDWARD W. JANSON."

If it should be proved that the Cape-York district is its true locality, it will then be the representative of *C. guttata* of the north-west, and *C. maculata* of the south. The principal distinguishing characteristic, in addition to its somewhat larger size, consists in the extreme beauty of its occipital patch, which is nearly twice as large as in the species mentioned, and is even of a more brilliant lilac colour, particularly if the frill be turned up and seen from beneath.

I have drawn in the accompanying Plate a male, about the size of life. The decorative bower forming part of the illustration is taken from a photograph of some unknown species sent to me by the late Mr. Coxen, of Brisbane; it may, or may not, be that of the present bird.