

SPHENOSTOMA CRISTATUM, *Gould.*

Crested Wedge-bill.

Sphenostoma cristatum, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 150.—Ib. Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

SEVERAL years have now elapsed since I published the characters of this bird in the "Zoological Proceedings," and a figure of the head in my "Synopsis." If I had little or nothing to communicate respecting its history at that time, I regret to say that the interval has not added to my knowledge of the subject. The specimen from which my description and figure were originally taken was a female; and although the male differs but little in its outward appearance, still the rather more produced form of the bill supplies a key as to what tribe of birds it appears to be most nearly allied, that of *Psophodes*; at the same time it must be admitted, that the affinity is somewhat remote, and it may be that my conclusions are not well-founded: a knowledge of its habits will materially assist in clearing up this point.

It is an inhabitant of the low scrubby trees and *Polygonum* bushes which stud the hot plains of the interior of Australia, particularly those on the borders of the Lachlan and Darling: Mr. Charles Coxen has also killed it on the Lower Namoi, but could tell me nothing of its habits. Whether it has any kind of loud sharp whistle analogous to that of the Coach-whip-bird (*Psophodes crepitans*), or if it has the same shy disposition, it would be interesting to ascertain; and to these points, as well as to all other details connected with its history, I would call the attention of those who may visit the interior, or may otherwise be favourably situated for observing them. The sombre tints of the bird are very like the colour of the earth of the plains it inhabits; and when the nature of its food shall have been ascertained, its wedge-shaped bill will doubtless be found admirably adapted for procuring it.

General plumage brown, lighter beneath; chin and centre of the abdomen greyish white; wings dark brown, edged with pale brown, the fourth and fifth primaries conspicuously margined with white; four centre tail-feathers dark brown, indistinctly barred with a still darker hue; the remainder brownish black, largely tipped with white; bill blackish brown; feet lead-colour.

The figures are of the natural size.