

MALURUS LEUCOPTERUS, *Quoy et Gaim.?*

White-winged Wren.

Malurus leucopterus, Quoy et Gaim. Zool. de l'Uranie, p. 108. pl. 23. fig. 2.?—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 222.

I REGRET that I have not been able to clear up the doubt which exists in my mind, whether the present beautiful bird is or is not distinct from the one figured by Messrs. Quoy and Gaimard in the "Voyage de l'Uranie," since on applying at the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes, for the purpose of examining the original specimen, it could not be found: the figure above quoted, if intended for the present bird, is by no means correct, and it is, moreover, said to be from Dirk Hatich's Island, on the western coast, a locality very distant from those in which I found the bird here represented; a circumstance which strengthens my belief that they may be distinct: besides which, the bird I have figured is supposed to be exclusively an inhabitant of the interior; I never even observed it between the mountain ranges and the coast; it is therefore scarcely probable that it should inhabit an island like that of Dirk Hatich.

It was tolerably abundant in the patches of low scrub and grassy beds, here and there scattered over the plains which stretch out to the northward of the Liverpool range, and it was equally plentiful on the Lower Namoi: that it extends as far as South Australia, is proved by my having received its nest and eggs from that part of the continent.

It was usually seen either in pairs or in small troops, and evinced so much shyness of disposition as to render the acquisition of specimens a task of no little difficulty, particularly of the full-plumaged male, who appeared to be conscious that the display of his gorgeously-coloured dress might lead to his detection. Its powers of flight are not great, but this is fully compensated for by the extraordinary manner in which it threads the bushes, and passes over the surface of the ground in a series of hopping bounds, whereby it readily eludes pursuit. The most successful mode of obtaining it is to ascertain the precise spot in which it is located, to approach it cautiously, and to remain silent for a short time, when the male will soon show himself by hopping out from the bush; the restless nature of his disposition not admitting of his remaining long concealed.

The beautifully contrasted colours of blue and white, represented in our Plate, is a merely seasonal dress assumed in spring, and continued throughout the breeding-season, which commences in August and terminates in January; before and after this season male birds may be seen in every stage of colouring, from plain uniform brown to that of the perfect livery.

The nest is composed of grasses, rather large and dome-shaped, with a hole near the top for an entrance. The one sent me from South Australia contained two eggs, one of which was the Bronze Cuckoo's, thus showing that this little bird is also the foster-parent of those birds. The number of eggs laid by the *Malurus leucopterus* is in all probability four: the one I possess is flesh-white, finely freckled with reddish brown, forming a zone at the larger end, and is eight lines long by six lines broad.

The male has the whole of the head, body above and beneath, and the tail beautiful deep blue; scapularies, wing-coverts and tertiaries snow-white; primaries brown, with their external edges silvery green; bill black; feet brown; eyes dark brown.

The female has the crown of the head, and all the upper surface and flanks brown; throat and abdomen white, faintly washed with brown; external edges of the primaries and tail pale greenish blue; bill reddish brown.

The Plate represents the male and female of the natural size; the Plant is the *Brunonia Australis*.