

MYZOMELA NIGRA, *Gould.*

Black Honey-eater.

Myzomela nigra, Gould in Birds of Australia, Part II. cancelled.

Dwer-da-ngok-ngun-nin, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

THIS most active little bird is peculiar to the interior of Australia, over which it has an extensive range. Mr. Gilbert found it in Western Australia, and I myself met with it on the plains near the Namoi; with me it was always on the Myalls (*Acacia pendula*), while in Western Australia, where it is very local, it generally evinced a preference for the saplin gums. Although it has the feathered tongue and sometimes partakes of the sweets of the flowers, it feeds almost exclusively on insects, which it procures both on the blossoms and among the thickly-foliaged branches. The male possesses a feeble plaintive note, which he frequently pours forth while perched upon some elevated dead branch, where he sits with his neck stretching out and without any apparent motion, except the swelling out of the throat and the movement of the bill. Its flight is remarkably quick, and performed with sudden zigzag starts.

The female differs remarkably from the male in the colouring of the plumage, and, as is the case with many other birds, is much more difficult of access than her mate, who is always more animated, and frequently betrays his presence by his voice or song.

Mr. Gilbert was more fortunate than myself in finding the nest of this little bird, and has furnished the following notes respecting its incubation:—

“ This species constructs a neat cup-shaped nest, formed of dried grasses. I found two, both of which were built in the most conspicuous situations; one in a fork at the top of a small scrubby bush, unsheltered by even a bough or a leaf; the other was on the dead branch of a fallen tree, in a similar exposed situation, and quite unprotected from wet or heat. It breeds during the months of October and November, and lays two eggs,” which are of a light brownish buff, encircled at the centre with a band of brown, produced by numerous small blotches of that colour, which appear as if beneath the surface of the shell; they are seven lines long by five and a half lines broad.

The male has the head, throat, stripe down the centre of the abdomen, all the upper surface, wings and tail sooty black; the remainder of the plumage pure white; irides blackish brown; bill and feet black.

The female differs in having the head, all the upper surface, wings and tail brown; throat and all the under surface brownish white, the centre of each feather being the darkest; bill brown; legs brownish black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.