

ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES.

By ALFRED J. NORTH, C.M.Z.S.

Ornithologist, Australian Museum.

I.

The Short-billed Honey-eater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*, Vig. and Horsf.), although not so uniformly distributed in the neighbourhood of Sydney as the Lunulated Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunulatus*, Shaw), is fairly common in some localities. Except in the breeding season, it is usually met with in small flocks of about seven to twelve or more in number, and generally attracts one's attention by its peculiar grating or rasping notes as it passes from tree to tree.

During many years' observation I have noted a seasonal change in the colour of the bare space above and behind the eye. Adult specimens of both sexes obtained during July and August by the Curator, Mr. R. Etheridge, the Taxidermist, Mr. J. A. Thorpe, and myself, at Sutherland and Toongabbie, had the bill black, the legs and feet reddish-brown, the sides and soles of the feet ochreous yellow, and the bare space above and behind the eye pale greenish-blue. Adult examples obtained by me at Roseville from January to April inclusive, all had the bill, legs and feet of the same colour as specimens obtained in July and August, but the bare space above and behind the eye was dull yellow. The last example procured was an adult female, on the 7th January, 1904, shot together with a fledgeling Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*, Lath.), that had only then recently left the nest of the foster-parent, in a tree close to my house. These specimens have been mounted together and placed in the Exhibit Collection. A similar seasonal change occurs in the colour of the bare space around the eye of the adult male of the Fig-bird (*Sphecothebes maxillaris*, Lath.); this part in the winter being pale buffy-yellow, and in the breeding season a uniform rich red. The comb too of the Lotus-bird or Comb-crested Parra (*Hydratorator gallinaceus*, Temm.), Mr. G. Savidge informs me, in the autumn is yellow, but at the time of my visit to the Clarence River during the breeding season in November, all the birds I saw had the comb red.