

OCCURRENCE OF *CHIBEA BRACTEATA* (GOULD)
IN TASMANIA.

BY COL. W. V. LEGGE, R.A., F.Z.S.

I have much pleasure in bringing to the notice of the Fellows of the Society this evening the occurrence of the Australian Drongo in Tasmania, and exhibiting a specimen of this bird, which was shot on the 1st of May, at Falmouth, by Master Steele.

Of all the occasional visitants to Tasmania, which have from time to time been recorded, the present is, perhaps, one of the most interesting, as on reference to Mr. Ramsay's distribution list it does not appear to have been hitherto noticed farther south than New South Wales, on the mainland, and its occurrence, therefore, in the more southern locality of Tasmania, is all the more remarkable. Its having been met with on the East Coast, tolerably far North, is a proof that the Bass Straits Islands form a halting or resting place for any birds that may under pressure of strong northerly winds, wander beyond their usual habitat in this direction, and taking a further flight southwards arrive on the shores of Tasmania, about the locality where this bird was killed. It is noteworthy that once before an occasional visitant to this island was first recorded from the same place. I speak of the Leaden Flycatcher, *Myiagra rubeciula*, obtained by myself when on a visit to this island in 1868.

The Drongo now before us was killed on the skirts of the bush, a short distance from the sea. It was there, probably, frequenting the dead or overspreading branches of trees, and following its flycatching habits, when it was espied and fell a victim to the youthful sportsman. It is not a bird of long flight, merely launching itself about from tree to tree in pursuit of flies and beetles, with an occasional stretch, when it compasses longer distances, with the object of changing its position in quest of food.

A few remarks on the interesting family to which this bird belongs may not be out of place here.

The *Dicruridae*—Drongos or Drongo-shrikes—is a family numbering 10 recognised genera containing about 40 species (if sub-species or varieties be counted), and which has an African, Asian, and Austro-Malayan distribution, extending laterally from Western Africa to New Britain, and vertically from Japan to South Africa and New South Wales. The occurrence, therefore, of the present species in Tasmania extends the southerly range of the family to the farthest point yet reached.

In Africa the family is represented by only five species, three of which belong to the genus *Dicurus*, the fourth to *Buchanga*, and universally distributed throughout that continent, and the fifth to the peculiar Madagascar genus *Edolius*. The genera *Dicurus*, *Chibia*, and *Buchanga*, contain the most species, and *Chibia* is the genus so largely represented in the Austro-Malayan region, our present bird being one of its members; other species of the genus are found in Lombok, Flores, Batchian, Gilolo, Aru Islands, Ceram, Papua, Sirla Islands, New Britain, Celebes, and Ke Islands. There are likewise the peculiar Papuan genus *Choetorhynchus*, and a member of the genus *Chaptia* (*C. Malayensis*), from Sumatra and Borneo to swell the list of Drongos from Austro-Malaya.

In no single country, however, do the Drongos come so prominently forward as in Ceylon, in which there are no fewer than five species, three of which belong to *Buchanga*, and the other two to *Dissemurus* and *Dissemuroides* (the crested Drongos) and the kings of the whole family. The large Racket-tailed Drongo, *D. paradiseus*, which is one of the crested species, is remarkable for the varying form of the beautiful outer-tail feathers, from which it derives its name, as well as for its extraordinary power of mockery. It imitates almost every bird in the forest, which has loud notes enough to attract its attention, and is a very tyrant in its habits, selecting the Red Woodpeckers of the Ceylon forests for its special attacks. I have seen it swoop across open spaces in the jungle at these birds, seemingly with the sole object of disturbing them while in search of their food; it would then perhaps dart up to a bush and commence mocking other birds with all its power.