FALCUNCLUS FRONATUS: Vieill.
FALCUNCUS FRONTATUS, Vieill.
Frontal Shrike-Tit.

Falcuncus frontatus, Vieill. Oe. des Ois., tom. i. pl. 138.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 212.—

I had many opportunities of observing this bird, both in New South Wales and South Australia, over both
of which countries it is very generally although not numerous dispersed. It does not inhabit Western
Australia, neither have I as yet received it from the north coast. It alike inhabits the thick bushes as well
as the trees of the open plains. Its chief food is insects, which are either obtained among the foliage
or under the bark of the larger branches and trunks of the trees; in procuring these it displays great
dexterity, stripping off the bark in the most determined manner, for which purpose its powerful bill is
admirably adapted.

It is very animated and sprightly in its actions, and in many of its habits bears a striking resemblance to
the Tits, particularly in the manner in which it clings to and climbs among the branches in search of food.
While thus employed it frequently erects its crest and assumes many part and lively positions: no bird of
its size with which I am acquainted possesses greater strength in its mandibles, or is capable of inflicting
severer wounds, as I experienced on handling one I had previously winged, and which fastened on my hand
in the most ferocious manner.

As far as I am aware, the Falcuncus frontatus is not distinguished by any powers of song, merely uttering
a few low piping notes.

I could neither succeed in procuring the nest of this species nor obtain any authentic information respecting its nidification.

The stomachs of the specimens I dissected were filled with the larve of insects and berries.

The male has immediately above the bill a narrow band of white, from which, down the centre of the
head, is a broad stripe of black feathers forming a crest; sides of the face and head white, divided by a line
of black which passes through the eye to the nape; back, shoulders and wing-coverts olive; primaries
and secondaries blackish brown broadly margined with grey; tail blackish brown broadly margined with
grey, especially on the two centre feathers; two outer tail-feathers and tips of the remainder white, the white
diminishing on each feather as it approaches the centre of the tail; throat black; all the under surface
bright yellow; irides reddish brown; bill black; legs and feet bluish grey.

The sexes may at all times be distinguished from each other by the smaller size of the female, and by the
colouring of the throat being green instead of black; by the irides being darker and the feet bluish lead-
colour.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size, on a branch of a shrub-like tree which I
gathered in the district of Illawarra, but of which I have not been able to obtain the name.