

THE YELLOW-THROATED SCRUBWREN

Sericornis citreogularis



Photo: Glen Fergus
O'Reillys Guest House,
Queensland, Australia
January 2008

The Yellow-throated Scrubwren is a passerine bird found in the eastern coastal area of Australia.

A small ground-dwelling insectivorous bird that inhabits wet forest or rainforest, the species features a distinctive yellow throat and eyebrow.

The Yellow-throated Scrubwren was originally described by the renowned ornithologist John Gould in 1838. The specific epithet *citreogularis* is derived from the Latin terms *citræus* "pertaining to citrus" and *gŭla* "throat", hence "yellow-throated". The amateur ornithologist Gregory

Mathews described the northern subspecies *cairnsii* in 1912.

The species measures 12.5-15cm (5-6") in length. The male has a black masked face and ear coverts, and a yellow throat and eyebrow. The upperparts brownish-olive and the underparts pale yellowish-white. The wing primaries are yellow and the relatively long legs pinkish-cream. The iris is reddish. The female is similar but has a brownish face. Calls include a loud harsh chatter, and a lively song, the latter is often a response to a loud noise such as the slamming of a car door.

The Yellow-throated Scrubwren has two widely separated distributions; *S.c. cairnsii* inhabits the coastal area of northern Queensland, from Cooktown to Townsville, while *S. citreogularis* occurs from Hervey Bay in southern coastal Queensland southwards through to south-eastern New South Wales. The usual habitat is rainforest gullies, generally in close proximity to water.

They forage at ground level for their insectivorous diet, unlike the related Large-billed Scrubwren, *S. Magnirostris*, which lives in the same wet forest habitat but forages higher in the leaf layer and on branches.

The breeding season is from June to March, with two or more broods raised in a season. The pear-shaped nest is a large structure consisting of long pieces of dried grasses, leaves, sticks, palm fibre and bark. Feathers and fern are used for lining. The nest is usually suspended from a vine or branch and is often hung above water. It can easily be mistaken for flood debris as it is often constructed near it. The usual clutch consists of two to three tapered oval eggs measuring 26 x 18mm (1 x 0.7"). Their colouration



John Gould
1804-1881
British ornithologist

can vary from brownish-purple to pale brownish-white with darker spots or blotches. The larger end of the egg is markedly darker in colour. The nest is sometimes expanded in subsequent years by the birds adding an extra chamber. The Large-billed Scrubwren, *Sericornis magnirostris*, often refurbishes used Yellow-throated Scrubwren nests to lay in; and the Golden-tipped Bat, *Phoniscus papuensis*, prefers Yellow-throated Scrubwren nests as roosting sites.



Golden-tipped Bat

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia

October 2010

BIRD KEEPING IN AUSTRALIA