

Observations of White-throated Treecreeper behaviour

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On 15 July 2009 I observed a pair of White-throated Treecreepers *Cormobates leucophaea*, foraging in several *Melaleuca armillaris* in our back yard. While foraging in separate trees, they kept in contact with subdued ‘pip’ calls. Every few minutes the male would fly to the same tree as the female, and, with the crown feathers slightly raised and uttering a soft trilling call, approach her from below and offer food, which she accepted. The male would then fly to another tree and they would continue to forage independently. This behaviour has been recorded previously (Higgins *et al.* 2001: 204). The behaviour continued for another week, then both birds disappeared from the yard. A lone male bird reappeared in the yard the following year, in late January 2010.

The plumage of the female was interesting in that she had a rufous-coloured band about 10 mm wide at the tip of her tail, and rufous wing primaries

(**Figure 1**). It is recorded that juvenile birds have ‘upper tail coverts uniformly rufous, or, patchily rufous’ (Higgins *et al.* 2001: 197), but there is no mention of rufous primaries or tip of the tail.

As this was mid July, and only about 2 weeks from the usual breeding season, August to January (Higgins *et al.* 2001: 205), one must ask if this was the beginning of a breeding event between a mature male and a female with some juvenile plumage present. The pair then left the area, possibly to breed.

REFERENCE

Higgins, P.J., Peter, J.M. and Steele, W.K. (Eds) (2001). ‘Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds Volume 5: Tyrant-flycatchers to Chats’. (Oxford University Press: Melbourne.)

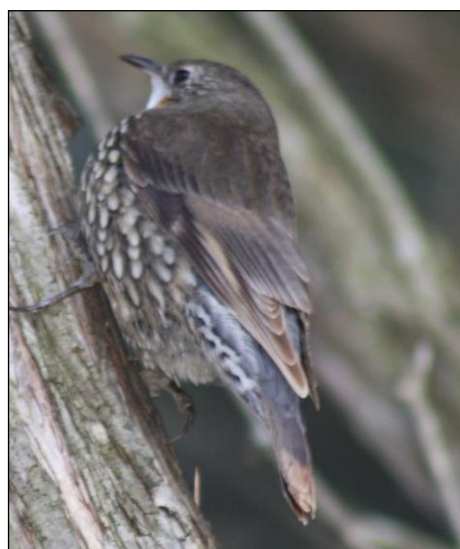


Figure 1. Female White-throated Treecreeper with rufous wing primaries and rufous-coloured band at tail tip.