

BIRD IN THE HAND

by H. J. de S. Disney, drawings by Celia Tanner, Australian Museum, Sydney.

Speckled Warbler *Chthonicola sagittata*

The problem of the black and reddish "eyebrows" in the Speckled Warbler was brought to notice by S. and D. Wilson, *Aust. Bird Bander*, vol. 3, no. 3, page 52 (September 1965). Their evidence showed that this difference in plumage was not seasonal. After examination of the skins in the Australian Museum, most of which were more than 50 years old, they were unable to determine from the information on the labels, if it was a sex character.

Sexing

More recent material has now been obtained and it is clear that Speckled Warblers with black "eyebrows" are males and those with reddish "eyebrows" are females. It appears that this difference between the sexes is assumed with the first feathers. Adult males are larger than adult females but there is an overlap with juvenile and immature birds.

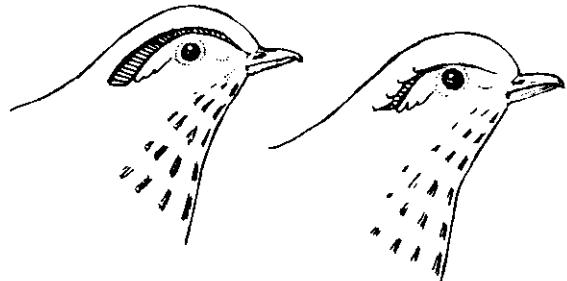
brown band. This also is sometimes obscured over the eye, but is usually plainly visible behind the eye on the side of the nape.

Ageing

There are indications of age characters separating juvenile, first year and second year birds but further material is required to confirm these.

Male:

Sides of crown and face: White lores extending as a white stripe over and behind the eyes. Above this stripe, from the lores, is a black band, narrow at first, then becoming broader down the sides of the nape. This black band may be partly hidden by the crown feathers above the eye, but it is always visible behind the eye on the side of the nape.



Female:

Sides of crown and face: Similar to male but the black band is replaced by a reddish-

- The "eyebrow" shown fully exposed in the figure at left, and partly hidden in the other figure (see text).