

GELOCHELIDON MACROTARSA, Gould.
Great-footed Tern.

Sterna macrotarsa, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part v. p. 26; and in Syn. Birds of Aust., pl. . fig. 2.

It is now about twenty-five years ago since a small collection of Australian birds was sent to the Council of King's College, London, as a donation to their museum. In this collection was a fine species of Tern, which proved to be new to science, and of which I published, in 1837, a full description, together with its admeasurements and a sketch of the head, under the name of *Sterna macrotarsa*. In the interval between 1837 and 1859, I have only seen two other examples; it is evident, therefore, that the bird is extremely rare, or that we have not yet visited its true habitat. One of the two specimens referred to was procured by the late Mr. Elsey on the Victoria River in North-western Australia, and is now in the British Museum; the other, which is in my own possession, was obtained at Moreton Bay. The specimen in my own collection (and, I believe, the one procured by Mr. Elsey) is considerably larger in all its admeasurements than that in the King's College Museum; and the latter, which is probably a female, very much exceeds in size the Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon Anglica*) of Europe, to which species the present bird is nearly allied, and of which it is evidently the representative on the Australian continent. One of the principal features which distinguishes the Australian bird from its northern representative, is its light and silvery-coloured back and wings; it has also a much stouter and longer bill, as well as longer and larger legs.

I have at this moment before me, for the purpose of comparison, beautiful skins of the *G. Anglica*, collected by Mr. Osbert Salvin in North Africa; one from the continent of India, and another from Java: all these are as nearly alike as possible in colour and admeasurements; it is evident therefore that the European and Indian birds are of the same species.

The following are the admeasurements of the bird I have figured from:—

Total length 17 inches; bill, $2\frac{1}{4}$; wing, $13\frac{1}{2}$; tail, 6; tarsi, $1\frac{1}{2}$.

In summer the crown of the head and back of the neck are black; all the upper surface and primaries are light silvery grey; the remainder of the plumage is white; and the bill and feet are black.

In winter the black colouring of the head probably disappears and is replaced by white.

The figure is somewhat less than the natural size.