

GEOPSITTACUS OCCIDENTALIS, Gould.

Nocturnal Ground-Parrakeet.

Geopsittacus occidentalis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1861, p. 100.—Id., Handb. Birds of Aust., vol. ii. p. 88.

I TRUST that Ornithologists will not for a moment consider the present species identical with the *Pezoporus formosus* in any state of plumage, as a first glance at its colour and markings might lead them to suppose; for I am sure it is not only specifically, but generically distinct; and I believe that the differences in its structure, pointed out below, will be found to be accompanied by a corresponding difference in its habits, actions, and economy, whenever they become known. Both sexes of *Pezoporus* have a red frontal band, a moderately short bill, rounded wings, a lengthened tail, long, thin tarsi, and long curved nails; while *Geopsittacus* is a stout, short-tailed, dumpy bird, with a bluff head, a full, round, jet-black eye, no frontal band, a very stout bill, large wings, fleshy legs, and extremely small nails—a structure which leads me to the conclusion that it affects holes in rocks or the hollow boles and branches of large prostrate trees. Besides the differences already mentioned, I observe that its nostrils are larger and more fleshy, reminding us in this respect of *Strigops*, to which it also assimilates in colour and markings. The precise locality inhabited by this remarkable Parrakeet is unknown to me. The specimen from which my original description was taken I received direct from Perth, in Western Australia; and all the information that accompanied it was that it came from the interior. Every part of the plumage (on the body, wings, and tail) indicates that it was fully adult; and I trust that the time is not far distant when other examples will be collected and sent to Europe, with an account of the habits and economy of the bird.

Thus much had been written and sent to press respecting this new species, when I was informed that a living example of a strange and remarkable Parrakeet had been transmitted by Dr. Ferdinand Mueller, Director of the Botanic Garden at Melbourne, to Mr. P. L. Selater, the Secretary of the Zoological Society of London. On visiting the Society's gardens for the purpose of inspecting it, I found, to my great delight, that it was an example of the bird under consideration, in good health, and in the finest state of plumage. This unexpected event enables me to give a more perfect representation of the bird than I could have given from a dried skin. However much I was pleased with the sight of the living bird, I was still more so when I found my views as to some of its habits confirmed by Dr. Mueller's letter to Mr. Selater, in which he states that the bird is a nocturnal one, living during the day in the rocky caves of the ranges, and coming out at night for food, like the Owls and crepuscular Nightjars. Dr. Mueller adds that the living individual sent by him was caught in the Gawler Ranges, situated in that part of South Australia which lies westward of the head of Spencer's Gulf, the fauna of which, we have abundant evidence to show, is very nearly the same as that of Western Australia; I have therefore very little doubt that the bird inhabits all the intervening districts. In its actions and disposition in a cage, the *Geopsittacus* justifies its generic appellation; for it has never been seen to perch, but moves over the floor of its domicile in a series of jumps, much like those of a Sparrow; at times, however, it dashes about from corner to corner with a more rapid motion. Mr. Bartlett informs me that, like all other nocturnes, it becomes much more wakeful and active at night, nibbling its tuft of grass, water-cress, millet, and canary-seed like a Rabbit. As yet it has not been heard to utter any sound, except a faint whistle.

In closing this necessarily brief account of this *Strigops*-looking Parrakeet, I must not omit recording our obligations to the Zoological Society's valued Corresponding Member, Dr. Mueller, for his kindness in transmitting this singular bird to England.

All the upper surface grass-green, each feather crossed by irregular bands of black and greenish yellow; feathers of the crown and nape with a streak of black down the centre; throat and breast yellowish green, passing into sulphur-yellow on the abdomen; spurious wings brown; primaries and secondaries brown, narrowly fringed with a greenish hue on their external webs, with the exception of the first three; those feathers have also an oblique mark of yellow near their bases, which increases in breadth and in depth of colour as the feathers approach the body; two central tail-feathers dark brown, toothed on the edge of both webs with greenish yellow; the next on each side dark brown, toothed on the outer web only with brighter and longer marks of yellow; the remainder dark brown, crossed by bands of yellow, which, in some cases, are continuous across both webs, and in others alternate; under tail-coverts sulphur-yellow, crossed on their outer webs with narrow, oblique and irregular bands of blackish brown; bill horn-colour.

Total length 10 inches, bill $\frac{1}{2}$, wing $5\frac{1}{2}$, tail 5, tarsi $\frac{7}{8}$.

The above is the description and admeasurements of the original specimen; an inspection of the living bird enables me to add that the nostrils are large and bluish grey, the eyes round, full, and jet-black, and the feet flesh-coloured.

The figures are of the natural size.