

The two middle feathers of the tail are in the form of slender wires about five inches long and which diverge in a beautiful curve. Almost half an inch of the end of this wire is webbed on the outer side only, and coloured of a fine metallic green; and being curved spirally inwards, they form a pair of elegant glittering buttons, hanging five inches below the body, and at the same distance apart. These two ornaments, the breast-fans and the spiral-tipped tail-wires, are altogether unique, not occurring on any other species of the eight thousand different birds that are known to exist upon the earth, and, combined with the most exquisite beauty of plumage, render this one of the most perfectly lovely of the many lovely productions of nature. My transports of admiration and delight quite amused my Aru hosts, who saw nothing more in 'Burong raja' than we do in the Robin or Goldfinch. Thus one of my objects in coming to the far east was accomplished. I had obtained a specimen of the King Bird of Paradise, which had been described by Linnæus from skins preserved in a mutilated state by the natives. I knew how few Europeans had ever beheld the perfect little organism I now gazed upon, and how very imperfectly it was still known in Europe. The emotions excited in the mind of a naturalist who has long desired to see the actual thing which he has hitherto known only by description, drawing, or badly preserved external covering, especially when that thing is of surpassing rarity and beauty, require the poetic faculty fully to express them. After the first King bird was obtained, I went with my men into the forest; and we were not only rewarded with another in equally perfect plumage, but I was enabled to see a little of the habits of both it and the larger species. It frequents the lower trees of the less dense forests, and is very active, flying strongly with a whirring sound, and constantly hopping or flying from branch to branch. It eats hard stone-bearing fruits as large as a gooseberry, and often flutters its wings after the manner of the South-American Manakins, at which times it elevates and expands the beautiful fans with which its breast is adorned. The natives of Aru call it 'Goby-goby.' "

Mr. Goodwin, who was the naturalist to Sir William Macgregor's expedition to Mount Owen Stanley, writes:—"After we had left the low country and had commenced our ascent, we met with the King Bird, and secured several specimens on the first day. This was the first time I had the pleasure of seeing it in all its beauty, for the legs, when the bird is alive, are of a beautifully clear cobalt-blue, but they become black and shrivelled when the bird is dead. We did not meet with any more, and I do not think that this magnificent little bird is found at a higher altitude than 2000 feet above the sea-level, or far away from the coast. It is a restless little body, and not easy to see or to secure. It feeds on berries and seeds, which are plentiful in that locality."

Baron von Rosenberg states that the cry of this species, which is often uttered, has much similarity to the mewling of a kitten, and sounds like the word *kau*, which is pronounced in a soft tone like that of a flute.

The following descriptions are copied from the pages of the 'Catalogue of Birds':—

"*Adult male*. General colour above brilliant metallic crimson, slightly orange under certain lights, and more particularly so in the frontal plumes; above the eye a spot of green velvety feathers, appearing black in most lights; sides of head and sides of neck crimson like the back; entire throat and fore neck rich purplish crimson, the lower feathers tipped with orange-buff, forming a band across the fore neck, followed by a small pectoral band of rich metallic green, while from each side of the breast springs a tuft of long plumes, ashy brown in colour, tipped with metallic green, each feather with a subterminal line of buff and a second narrower one of reddish brown; remainder of under surface, including the under wing- and under tail-coverts pure white; scapulars and wings crimson, like the back; the quills orange-brown, externally washed with crimson, the innermost secondaries being entirely of the latter colour; tail ashy brown, the feathers margined with crimson or orange-red, the whole tail hidden with the long tail-coverts; two centre feathers elongated into a thread-like wire, with a curved disk of metallic green at the tip; 'iris brown; bill yellowish horn-colour, becoming quite yellow in the dried skin, in the female and young male brownish; legs and feet bright blue, somewhat duller in the female; inside of mouth bright yellowish green' (*F. H. H. Guillemand*). Total length 6.6 inches, culmen 0.8, wing 3.75, tail 1.6, middle tail-feathers 6.5, tarsus 1.1.

"*Adult female*. Dissimilar to the male. General colour above uniform brown, with a slight olive or golden shade, more particularly on the head; least and median wing-coverts uniform with the back; greater coverts and quills darker brown, externally washed with reddish orange; tail brown, with a slight golden gloss; loreal plumes, feathers round the eye, sides of face, and throat dusky, varied with minute straw-coloured mesial streaks; rest of under surface pale fulvous, washed with golden buff on the fore neck, all transversely barred with dusky brown; under wing-coverts and axillaries rufous obscurely barred with brown, the edge of the wing golden orange. Total length 7.2 inches, wing 3.9, tail 2.5, tarsus 1.05.

"*Young male*. Similar to the adult female at first, but with a dull crimson shade on the wing. When the crimson plumage of the adult is nearly complete the two central feathers of the tail are put on, the shafts being feathered the whole way, and the ends of the feathers having the web entire and curved round. From the excellent series in the British Museum it would appear that the curve is gradually continued upon the feather itself, and that when the twist is complete the metallic green colour is assumed without a change of feather. One young male before me has one racket brown, and the other metallic green."

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