

PODARGUS PAPUENSIS, Quoy et Gaim.

Papuan Podargus.

Podargus Papuensis, Quoy et Gaim. Voy. de l'Astrol., Ois. t. 13.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 45,
Podargus, sp. 9.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 57, *Podargus*, sp. 6.

THE great country of Australia is certainly the head-quarters of the larger members of the *Caprimulgidae*, constituting the genus *Podargus*, of which the present species may be considered a typical example. Of this fine bird several specimens were procured during the late voyage of Her Majesty's Ship Rattlesnake, under the command of Captain Owen Stanley, with Mr. MacGillivray as Naturalist, whose names will ever hold a prominent place in the annals of science for their discoveries in various branches of natural history. All the specimens were obtained at Cape York, the contiguity of which to New Guinea induced me to believe the bird to be identical with the one described and figured by MM. Quoy and Gaimard in the Voyage of the Astrolabe under the name of *Podargus Papuensis*; but on comparing the Australian bird with their plate, I had some doubts on the subject; I therefore conveyed the specimen to Paris and Leyden, for the purpose of instituting a comparison between it and the original New Guinea examples from which MM. Quoy and Gaimard took their figure and description; and from the following note made at the time, it will be seen that I came to the conclusion that they are identical. I think it necessary to mention this, because my Plate and that in the Voyage of the Astrolabe will not be found to agree: every care has been taken to render mine as correct a representation of the bird as possible: any comment on that in the French work is unnecessary.

"The *Podargus* from Cape York is too near to *P. Papuensis* to rank as a distinct species. The two specimens in the Leyden Museum differ very considerably in colour; one being freckled with fine markings of brown and buff, like the common *Podargus* of Australia, the other covered with large blotches of greyish-white and conspicuous markings of brown and black from the crown of the head to the end of the tail-feathers; the breast too of the larger specimen is conspicuously blotched with white, while that of the smaller one is finely freckled with grey, brown and black; the thighs of both are darkish brown. The Cape York specimen is precisely the same size as the larger of these birds, in colour it is somewhat intermediate between the two, but most nearly resembles the lighter-coloured one; its thighs are of a lighter brown, slightly tinged with olive, than either of the Leyden specimens, both of which are from New Guinea. The Paris specimen has a larger and more denuded bill than those at Leyden, but in other respects they are very similar."

The *P. Papuensis* is the largest species of the genus yet discovered; the beauty of its markings and the extreme length of its cuneate tail render it also one of the most graceful. The only specimen that came into my possession from Mr. MacGillivray, for the purpose of figuring, before being deposited in the National Collection, was a male. This, as will be seen in the accompanying Plate, is light brown, beautifully marbled on the under surface with large blotches of white. I have another specimen, received through a different channel, but also from Cape York, which is said to be the female; and such, judging from its redder colouring and smaller size, I believe to be the case, as a similar difference is found to exist between the sexes of *P. marmoratus*.

The male has the whole of the upper surface mottled with greyish-white, brown and black, presenting a very close resemblance to some of the larger kinds of moths, the lighter tints prevailing in some parts and the darker in others; on the primaries the marks assume the form of bars, and are of a redder hue; tips of the coverts white, forming irregular bars across the wing; tail very similar, but here also the markings assume the form of alternate darker and lighter bands with a rufous tint on the edges of the feathers; the under surface is much lighter than the upper; the greyish-white assumes a larger and more blotch-like form, and the darker marks that of an irregular gorget across the breast; bill and feet olive.

The female, which I think somewhat immature, is altogether of a more sandy hue; the dark marks proceed down the centre of the feathers, and terminate in a round spot of buff; the wing-coverts are tipped with white, and the lighter blotches on the wing are very conspicuous; the under surface, like the upper, is also of a redder hue than in the male, and the markings are of a smaller and more freckled character.

The figure is that of an adult male of the natural size.