

## PRION TURTUR.

### Dove-like Prion.

*Procellaria Turtur*, Banks's Drawings, No. 15.

*Prion Turtur*, Gould in Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. xiii. p. 366.

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So much confusion exists among the species of this genus of Petrels, that a very minute examination has been required to identify those described by the older writers, and it has been with no little attention and care on the part of the late M. Natterer and myself, that we came to the conclusion that the bird forming the subject of the present memoir is that for which the name of *Turtur* should be retained. Of the four species inhabiting the southern seas, the present is the most delicate in colour, as well as the most slender and elegant in form; its bill is much less dilated at the base, and has the laminae much less developed than those of the *P. Banksii*, to which it is nearly allied, and with which it is sometimes seen in company. I find by my notes that I killed four specimens off Cape Howe on the 16th of April, during my passage from Van Diemen's Land to Sydney; and that it traverses the whole surface of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, between the 30th and 50th degrees of south latitude, I have but little doubt, having seen and even killed specimens nearly every day while sailing within those prescribed limits. Sometimes it appeared in countless multitudes, but more often thinly dispersed over the surface of the ocean. During calms it flits over the glassy waters with a noiseless and easy flight, often performing small circles, and fluttering butterfly-like over any oily substance thrown overboard, and which it sips off the surface without settling; occasionally, however, it rests its buoyant and fairy little body on the waters, where it reposes at perfect ease, until hunger again impels it to take wing in search of food. A more vigorous and active action of the wing being necessary to sustain it during the raging of the gale, it then moves with zigzag turns of lightning-like swiftness, ascending the billows, topping their surgy summits, and descending into the gulf between, where a momentary shelter enables it to gain fresh vigour, and seize from the slanting surface any floating mollusks that may present themselves, and which, from the disturbed state of the sea, are then thrown up in greater abundance than at other times.

The plumage of all the members of this genus is dense, thick, and extremely light; hence their bodies are much smaller than they appear to be. The average weight of several examples of this species was five ounces. Although the present bird and *Prion Banksii* were seen in company as before stated, the differences between the two were very observable; the extreme delicacy of colouring, and the smaller size of the *P. Turtur* strongly contrasting with the more bluff and darker-coloured head of the *P. Banksii*; when the wings were expanded, the black mark, similar to the letter W, was equally conspicuous in both.

All the upper surface delicate blue-grey; the edge of the shoulder, the scapularies, outer margins of the external primaries and the tips of the middle tail-feathers black; small spot before the eye and a stripe beneath black; lores, line over, beneath and behind the eye and all the under surface white, stained with blue on the flanks and under tail-coverts; bill light blue, deepening into black on the sides of the nostrils and at the tip, and with a black line along the side of the under mandible; irides very dark brown; feet beautiful light blue.

The figure is of the natural size.