

PARADISEA AUGUSTÆ-VICTORIÆ, Cab. 55.

Empress of Germany's Bird of Paradise.

Paradisea augustæ-victoriæ, Cab. J. f. O. 1888, p. 119, 1889, Taf. ii.—Salvad. Agg. Orn. Papuasias, ii. p. 159 (1890).—Meyer, Ibis, 1890, p. 421.—Salvad. Agg. Orn. Papuasias, iii. p. 241 (1891).—Meyer, Abhandl. k. zool. Mus. Dresden, 1892-93, no. 3, p. 17.—Id. Ibis, 1893, p. 481, pl. xiii.

THIS fine Bird of Paradise is intermediate between *Paradisea minor* and *P. raggiana*. It has a straw-coloured mantle, like *P. minor*, but in its narrow yellow collar on the throat and in its dense velvety fore neck it is like *P. raggiana*. The colour of the flank-plumes, however, being of a golden-orange, serves to distinguish it from both of the above-named species.

The habitat of the species appears to be the neighbourhood of Huon Gulf in Eastern New Guinea, and it is apparently common in that district, as Dr. Meyer has received several specimens from this locality procured by the brothers Geisler, who have made considerable collections in that locality, and have even obtained the egg of the species, of which a most interesting account has been given by Dr. Meyer in 'The Ibis' for 1893.

He gives the following note on the species:—"The breeding-season of *P. augustæ-victoriæ* begins in July, when the males, in companies of from three to six, hold their dancing-parties on the high trees. Females on the wing bearing nesting-materials were often seen, but for a long time no nest could be discovered. The males were also observed with like materials in their bills, though they generally dropped them again. At the end of October a young bird made its appearance on the mountains behind Butaueng on Huon Gulf. At this time of the year the rainy season (S.E. monsoon) generally ceases, and the dry N.W. monsoon then prevails till the beginning of April. The moulting of the Bird of Paradise begins at the end of October; in January the gorgeous new feathers begin to sprout, but it is only in July that the breeding-plumage becomes fully developed in its finest phase. The brothers Geisler once observed this Paradise-bird robbing the nest of *Chalcophaps stephani*; a specimen kept in captivity also sucked other eggs with avidity.

"According to the present state of our knowledge, *P. augustæ-victoriæ* has only a narrow range along the borders of Huon Gulf, north of which, in Astrolabe Bay, *P. finschi* occurs, and in South and South-east New Guinea *P. raggiana*, which is represented on the D'Entrecasteaux Islands by *P. decora*. It appears that red and yellow Paradise-birds do not occur together, but represent each other. According to the Geislars, *P. augustæ-victoriæ* never changes its hunting-ground."

Quite recently, Dr. Reichenow has described, under the name of *P. maria*, a Bird of Paradise from the Finisterre Mountains, which appears to be intermediate between *P. minor* and *P. augustæ-victoriæ*.

The discovery of an authentic egg of a Bird of Paradise is a very interesting event, as it proves that these birds lay an egg unlike those of the Corvidæ, and apparently characteristic of the family. The first authentic egg appears to have been described by Dr. Pierson Ramsay in 1883, being that of *P. raggiana*. In 1884 Dr. Meyer described and figured the egg of *P. apoda*. In 1892 Mr. Philip Crowley exhibited an egg of *P. raggiana* from South-eastern New Guinea, at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club, held on the 21st of December of that year.

In 'The Ibis' for October 1893 Dr. Meyer has given a figure of the egg of *P. augustæ-victoriæ*, with the following description of it:—"The general superficial impression made by these eggs calls to mind those of certain Rails,—some specimens of the eggs of *Crex pratensis*, for instance, having a similar appearance. The shell is coarse, with fine indentations and single deep pores, as in *Coracias*; it is everywhere polished and glossy, except a few of the paler and smaller spots, which are dull and glossless. The ground-colour is pale pinkish buff (cf. Ridgway, Nomencl. of Col. v. 14, but lighter), longitudinally streaked and spotted over the greater part of the large end. The darker streaks are remarkable for their length (10-15 mm. long, 2-4 mm. broad, or even narrower); the deeper-lying spots are rosy grey, the darker longitudinal streaks mostly reddish brown (walnut-brown, Ridgway, pl. iii. 7), but mixed with lighter and darker tints. There are several very dark spots, others are smaller and of a glossless brownish yellow; others, again, of this same colour are glossy. The small end of the egg has few spots; the pole of the large end is almost clear of spots.

"The form is ovate (Ridgway, xvi. 1), but more lengthened; the size 38×25.5 and 36.5×25 mm., and the weight 0.7 gr.