

ONYCHOPRION PANAYA.

Panayan Tern.

Sterna Panaya, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 808.—Gmel. Edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 607.—Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. p. 329.

L'Hirondelle de mer de Panay, Sonn. Voy., p. 125. pl. 84.—Buff. Hist. des Ois., tom. viii. p. 344.

Panayan Tern, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. vii. p. 363.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 119.

THIS bird visits many parts of the coasts of Australia, particularly those of the western side of the continent. It was found on the Houtmann's Abrolhos by Mr. Gilbert, who remarks that it commences breeding in the latter part of November, and that during the period of incubation it differs in its habits from all the other allied species, inasmuch as instead of being gregarious each pair remains solitary, and its single egg is deposited in the fissure of a rock close to the water's edge without any nest or flooring; he further states that it was very seldom seen at Port Essington, but that a great number flew around the ship during his voyage from thence to Singapore. Mr. McGillivray informs me that he first met with it on Solitary Island near Cape York; subsequently it was found on Raine's Islet by Comm. Ince, R.N., and by himself on Bramble Quay in Torres' Straits, where it was breeding in small numbers, and where it deposits its single egg in the holes of the loose friable coral sandstone; and it was here, while turning over some of the shells of dead turtle which had been apparently arranged by the natives who occasionally visit the place, that he was surprised to find beneath them several of this pretty Tern sitting on their egg without any nest. The egg is so similar to that of the Sooty Tern that the description of one will answer for both, but it is considerably smaller in size, the average measurement being one inch nine and a half lines long by one inch three and a half lines broad.

The stomach is membranous, and the food consists principally of fish.

Forehead, line over the eye, chin and throat white; lores, crown of the head and nape black; back, wings and tail light sooty brown, the outer tail-feather being white at the base and on the outer web for two-thirds of its length; edge of the shoulder and under surface of the wing white; under surface white, slightly washed with grey; irides blackish brown; bill black; legs and feet blackish green.

The figures are of the natural size.