

GYGIS CANDIDA.

White Tern.

Sterna alba, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 808.—Gmel. Linn. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 607.—Sparrm. Mus. Carls., tab. 11.

Sterna candida, Gmel. Linn., vol. i. p. 607.

White Tern, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. vi. p. 363.—Ib. Supp. p. 266.—Portl. Voy., pl. in p. 312.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 109.

Gygis candida, Wagl.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 100.—List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 180.

THIS lovely Tern visits the whole of the south-eastern coast of Australia from Moreton Bay to Cape York, and is also found on Norfolk Island, where it is said to breed.

Mr. Cuming informs me, that on his visiting Elizabeth Island in the South Seas, which is entirely destitute of inhabitants and of fresh water, he found it breeding on a species of *Pandanus*, its single white egg being deposited on the horizontal branches in a depression, which, although slight, was sufficient to retain it in position despite of the high winds and consequent oscillations to which it was subjected. Mr. Cuming adds, that the old birds were flying about in thousands, like swarms of bees, and that he noticed several breeding on the same tree; some of the young birds were hatched and covered with down, and being within reach, he took a few of them in his hand, and after examining replaced them on their dangerous resting-place, from which it appeared they occasionally fell down and were destroyed, as he observed several lying dead on the ground.

This bird is also noticed in the 'Journal of Researches in Geology and Natural History' of C. Darwin, Esq., who, when speaking of Keeling Island, says, "But there is one charming bird; a small and snow-white Tern which smoothly hovers at the distance of an arm's length from your head; its large black eye scanning with quiet curiosity your expression. Little imagination is required to fancy that so light and delicate a body must be tenanted by some wandering fairy spirit."

The sexes do not differ from each other in outward appearance.

The entire plumage is snow-white; bill dark blue at the base, black at the tip; irides black; feet orange.

The figures are of the natural size