

## LARUS PACIFICUS, *Lath.*

### Pacific Gull.

- Larus Pacificus*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. lxxviii.—Vieill. 2<sup>de</sup> édit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxi. p. 508.  
—Ib. Ency. Méth., tom. i. p. 345.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 617.—List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 170.
- Pacific Gull*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 332.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 169.
- Larus leucomelas*, Vieill. 2<sup>de</sup> édit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxi. p. 509.—Ib. Ency. Méth., tom. i. p. 346.  
pl. 234. fig. 4.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 617.
- *frontalis*, Vieill. 2<sup>de</sup> édit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxi. p. 505 ?—Ib. Ency. Méth., tom. i. p. 345 ?
- *Georgii*, King, Survey of the Intertropical Coast of Australia, vol. ii. p. 423.
- Nga-ga-la*, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.
- Larger Gull* of the Colonists.

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THE *Larus pacificus*, which differs from every other species I am acquainted with in the deepened form of the bill and in the pearly whiteness of the irides, is abundantly dispersed over all the shores of Van Diemen's Land, the islands in Bass's Straits, and the southern parts of the Australian continent. It ascends high up the larger rivers and arms of the sea, but is never, so far as I am aware, seen in the interior of the country. It is very powerful on the wing, often mounts high in the air, and soars in circles after the manner of the Eagle; in this particular habit, and in its less laborious flight, it differs considerably from its prototype, the *Larus marinus* of Europe, while in most other parts of the economy it as closely assimilates to it. It traverses the line of coast in search of food, which consists of any stranded carrion or floating animal substance, to which living fish, crabs, mollusks, and even small quadrupeds are added whenever opportunities occur.

When fully adult, the sexes can only be distinguished by the smaller size of the female; the young, on the contrary, for at least two years, differ so considerably as to favour the idea of their belonging to a different species; the mottled brown of this state, however, may frequently be seen gradually changing to the colouring of the adult, as may also the hue of the bill and eye, which gradually change with the plumage; the representation of these states in the accompanying Plate will render them more easily understood than the most lengthy description. This fine Gull breeds on most of the low islands round Van Diemen's Land; the eggs, which are generally three in number, being usually placed on the bare ledges of rock, although not unfrequently on the shore of the projecting points of small islands. The eggs are of a clear olive, marked all over with blotches of blackish and umber brown, some of the markings appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; they are two inches and five-eighths long by one inch and seven-eighths in breadth.

Head, neck, upper part of the back, all the under surface, upper and under tail-coverts white; back and wings dark slaty black, the secondaries largely tipped with white; primaries black, the innermost slightly tipped with white; tail white, the inner web of the outer feather and both webs of the remainder crossed near the tip with a broad band of black; irides pearl-white; legs yellow; claws black; eyelash yellow; bill orange stained with blood-red at the tip, in the midst of which in some specimens are a few blotches of black.

The young have the general plumage brown, with lighter margins to the feathers, giving them a mottled appearance; under tail-coverts nearly white; primaries and tail blackish brown; irides brown; bill yellowish brown, deepening into black at the tip.

The accompanying Plate represents an adult and a young bird, about two-thirds of the natural size.