

SPATULA RHYNCHOTIS.

Australian Shoveller.

Anas Rhynchotis, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp. p. lxx.

New Holland Shoveller, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 359.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 313.

Rhynchaspis Rhynchotis, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 123.—Eyton, Mon. of the Anat., p. 133.

————— *maculatus*, Gould in Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 147.

Spatula Rhynchotis, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., Part iii. p. 140.

Bâr-doo-ngoô-ba, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

Shovel-nosed Duck of the Colonists.

THE present bird affords another instance of that singular law of representation which so frequently occurs in the ornithology of Australia. In size and structure, and particularly in the conformation of the bill, the *Spatula Rhynchotis* closely assimilates to the *Spatula clypeata* of Europe and the *Spatula maculata* of South America. These three species, whose distinctive characters are most plainly developed, doubtless perform in their respective countries similar offices, and are all characterized by a similarity of habits and actions. Although ranging widely from east to west, the habitat of this species, so far as is yet known, is confined to the southern portion of Australia. It is, however, more abundant in Van Diemen's Land and the islands in Bass's Straits. New South Wales, South Australia and Swan River all come within the range of its habitat, but it is much more rare in Western Australia than in any other of the countries I have enumerated. Freshwater rivers, creeks, marshes, lakes and pools both near the coast and in the interior of the country are the situations in which the Australian Shoveller is to be found. I frequently met with it in company with other common ducks of the country, all united in one flock. It feeds on aquatic plants, shelled mollusks and water insects. Its flesh as an article of food is little if at all inferior to that of the Australian Wild Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), consequently it is frequently shot and eaten by the settlers. Like most of its tribe it assumes a richer dress at one season than at another, that of the spring or pairing-time being much the finest, and it is in this dress that I have figured the male; at other times he is so much like the female, which undergoes no change of plumage, as scarcely to be distinguished from her.

I did not succeed in finding the breeding-places of this species, consequently I am unable to give any account of its incubation, nest, or eggs.

The male has the crown of the head and the space surrounding the base of the bill brownish black; on either side of the face between the bill and the eye a broad lunar-shaped line of white, bounded posteriorly by speckles of black; head and neck grey, with greenish reflections; all the under surface very dark chestnut-brown, each feather with a broad crescent-shaped mark of black at the tip, which is very conspicuous on the breast; flanks rich chestnut, each feather crossed by several broad crescentic bands of black; back brownish black, the feathers of the upper part margined with greyish brown; lesser wing-coverts and outer webs of the scapularies blue-grey, the inner webs of the latter black, with a distinct line of white in the direction of and next to the shaft; greater wing-coverts black, largely tipped with white; outer webs of the secondaries rich deep glossy green; primaries very dark brown with lighter shafts; under surface of the wing white; on either side of the vent a patch of white, freckled with black; under tail-coverts black, tinged with shining green; tail dark brown; irides bright yellow; bill dark purplish black, the under mandible clouded with yellow; legs and feet yellow.

The female has the head and neck buff, striated with dark brown, the latter colour predominating on the crown of the head and back of the neck; all the upper surface dark brown, each feather margined with whitish brown; the wings as in the male, but the colours and markings much less brilliant and decided; all the under surface mottled brown and buff.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size.