

ANAS PUNCTATA, Cuv.

Chestnut-breasted Duck.

Anas punctata, Cuv.

Mareca castanea, Eyton, Mon. Anat., pl. in p. 119.

——— *punctata*, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., Part III. p. 134.

Gnwool-ye-nüg-ger-rang, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

Teal, Colonists of Swan River.

THE *Anas punctata* is universally diffused over the southern portion of Australia ; it is also equally numerous in some parts of Van Diemen's Land. It is not migratory, but may be met with during every month of the year. In two instances I found its nest and eggs. The situation of one was rather unusual, a hole near the top of a large tree growing on the flats near Aberdeen on the Upper Hunter ; this occurred in the month of October, and in the following December I raised a female from her nest among the herbage on Green Island in D'Entrecasteaux' Channel. In both instances the eggs were nine in number.

Like the Wild Duck and Teal of Europe, this bird inhabits rivers, brooks, lagoons and ponds, both inland and near the sea. It is a true grass-feeder, and is one of the best Ducks for the table that is found in the country. When surprised it rises quickly, but is less active than the European Teal ; it is, however, a bird of powerful flight. I frequently encountered it in vast flocks while ascending the little-visited rivers of the southern part of Van Diemen's Land, particularly those which empty themselves into the Recherche Bay. In these retired and solitary retreats it is much more tame than in frequented situations, and never failed to fly down the rivers over our heads as we ascended ; a measure which, although at the first view it appears to be that of flying into the danger it wished to avoid, was in fact the readiest means of escaping ; for had it taken the opposite course, it would have required great exertion to surmount the impenetrable forest of high trees, rising perpendicularly from the water's edge, in which these short and sluggish rivers usually terminate. It is very rare that the male is killed in the nuptial dress, and I am induced to believe that it is not assumed until the bird is two or three years old ; after the breeding-season the sexes are alike in plumage, and for at least nine months of the year there is no difference in their outward appearance.

The adult male in the spring of the year has the head and neck of a rich deep changeable bronzy green ; the whole of the upper surface rich brown, narrowly margined with light reddish brown ; all the under surface chestnut, with a round spot of black near the tip of each feather ; greater wing-coverts white ; outer webs of the secondaries deep rich velvety black, two or three of the central feathers margined with bronzy reflexions ; remainder of the wings brown ; tail dark brown ; on either side of the vent a patch of white ; under tail-coverts black, freckled with tawny and white ; bill bluish lead-colour ; the nail and the edges of the upper mandible black, and the under mandible crossed near the tip by a band of reddish flesh-colour ; irides hazel ; feet lead-colour, with the membranes of a somewhat darker hue.

The female, the male in winter, and the young male of the year, have the head and neck minutely striated with brown and buffy white ; all the under surface brown, with a blotch of black in the centre of each feather, and the upper surface, wings and tail similarly marked, but less brilliant than in the male.

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