

## ANAS SUPERCILIOSA, *Gmel.*

### Australian Wild Duck.

*Anas superciliosa*, Gmel. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 537.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 852.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. x. p. 327.—  
Eyton, Mon. Anat., p. 139.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 108.—List of Birds in  
Brit. Mus. Coll., Part III. p. 135.

—— *leucophrys*, Forst. Drawings, No. 77.

*Supercilious Duck*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. vi. p. 497.

*Gwoom-nân-na*, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

*Black Duck*, Colonists of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.

*He-turrera*, Aborigines of New Zealand.

*Grey Duck*, Colonists of Swan River.

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THIS species may be considered as the Australian representative of the Common Wild Duck (*Anas Boschas*) of Europe. It enjoys a wide range of habitat, all the southern portion of the continent, Van Diemen's Land, and the islands in Bass's Straits being alike favoured with its presence; it also inhabits New Zealand; at least specimens from thence offer so slight a variation that I cannot consider them to be otherwise than identical.

In habits, manners and general economy, the European and Australian species approximate most closely; their flesh is similar in flavour, and the one is as highly esteemed and as much sought after for the table in Australia as the other is in Europe: as regards external appearance, however, no comparison can be made between the two birds; for while the male of the *Anas Boschas* during the greater part of the year is remarkable for the beauty of his plumage, the *Anas superciliosa*, being subject to no periodical change, is always clothed in the sombre-coloured dress represented in the Plate; neither do the sexes offer any difference of colour by which the one may be distinguished from the other. Arms of the sea, rivers with sedgy banks, lagoons and water-holes are its favourite places of resort. I encountered it often and under every variety of circumstance, sometimes in flocks, at others either singly or in pairs, and not unfrequently in company with other species. It abounds on all the rivers of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. The tameness or wariness of its disposition depends much upon whether the locality in which it is observed has or has not been frequented by man; in some of the rivers in Recherche Bay in Van Diemen's Land and others in the interior of the continent of Australia, which are rarely visited, it evinced much less shyness than when observed on the waters of the populated districts. It is everywhere either a stationary species or subject to very partial migrations. In the choice of a breeding-place it appears to be influenced by circumstances, sometimes depositing its eggs among long grass and sedges, and not unfrequently resorting to hollow spouts and boles of trees for the same purpose. I possess a fine nest of nine eggs, which was taken in September from the hollow part of a tree at Moore's River in Western Australia; they are of a dark cream-colour, two inches and a quarter long by one inch and five-eighths broad.

Head very dark brown; a narrow line above the eye, a broad stripe from the bill beneath the eye, and the throat buff; sides of the neck striated with buff and dark brown; all the upper surface, wings and tail rich brown, the feathers narrowly margined with buffy brown; tips of the greater wing-coverts velvety black; speculum rich deep glossy green, bounded posteriorly with velvety black; under surface brown, each feather edged with pale brownish white; bill light bluish lead-colour; irides bright hazel; legs yellowish brown with darker webs.

The Plate represents an adult bird of the natural size.