

NETTAPUS PULCHELLUS, Gould.

Beautiful Pygmy Goose.

Nettapus pulchellus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., November 9, 1841.

Loon-byte, Aborigines of the northern coast of Australia.

Little Goose, Residents at Port Essington.

THE acquisition of an entirely new species of *Nettapus*, a generic name applied to these Pygmy Geese by M. Brandt of St. Petersburg, is not one of the least valuable results of the exploration of the northern coast of Australia; independently of its great beauty, the present species is interesting, as uniting most completely, in the character and disposition of some of its markings, the two previously known species, *N. Coromandelianus* and *N. Madagascariensis*, which differ very considerably in these points. Although very goose-like in the form of its head and bill, particularly in the elevation of the upper mandible, its largely webbed feet indicate a strictly aquatic mode of life; and in the notes accompanying the two specimens shot at Port Essington by Mr. Gilbert, he states that he first saw a pair of these beautiful birds on the 16th of January, swimming on a quiet secluded lake, shut in on all sides by very high grass: both of these he succeeded in killing at a shot; he further states that they are rare in the Peninsula, only one specimen having been procured prior to his obtaining these two. It is an extremely shy species, and at the slightest movement of anything near it, dives and remains under water a long time. Having, on dissecting the female, found a nearly developed egg in the ovarium, he was induced to seek for the nest, which he found built up in the long grass about a foot above the water, the bottom of the nest resting on its surface; it was composed of long dried grasses, slightly hollowed for the reception of the eggs: the nest in this instance was destitute of any kind of lining; but one afterwards brought him by the natives was lined with feathers and contained six eggs, which are white, one inch and seven-eighths long by one inch and three-eighths broad.

Since the receipt of Mr. Gilbert's specimens another has been kindly sent to me by Mr. Bynoe, making the fourth that has been obtained; beyond this nothing further is known respecting it.

The male has the head brownish green, indistinctly barred with light brown; beneath the eye an oval spot of white; neck, back and wings deep glossy green; primaries black; outer webs of the secondaries snow-white; feathers of the chest, sides and back of the neck white, with a number of greenish black circles one within the other, so numerous that the white is nearly lost; flanks similarly marked, but in them the circles, bars and pencillings are broader and more apparent; tail black glossed with green; abdomen white; under tail-coverts black; irides dark brown; bill dark greenish grey; legs and feet blackish brown, with a yellowish white nail; under mandible greenish grey, irregularly blotched with a lighter colour.

The female resembles the male, but differs in having the crown, occiput and a stripe down the back of the neck deep brown; in being destitute of the white spot beneath the eye; in having the chin and upper part of the throat white, mottled with small markings of brown; bill French grey, becoming more yellow at the base; lower mandible bluish grey; tarsi fleshy white on the sides, back and front blackish brown; feet dark brown.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.