

PORZANA? IMMACULATA.

Spotless Gallinule.

Gallinula immaculata, Swains. An. in Menag., p. 337.—Ib. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 358.
Waŕ-ra-jah, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.
Little Swamp Hen of the Colonists.

I BELIEVE I am correct in stating that this species is universally distributed over the whole of Australia, Van Diemen's Land, and the islands in Bass's Straits. My collection contains specimens from every one of the colonies, all of which so closely resemble each other, that they scarcely exhibit sufficient difference to constitute local varieties. Like the other members of the group this bird is very recluse in its habits, and seldom to be seen, although it is tolerably abundant in all districts of a wet and swampy character, where thick reed-beds, and the sedgy banks of rivers or lagoons constitute its most favourite places of abode. When urged by necessity it swims with grace and elegance, and sports about with ease among the floating leaves of aquatic plants in search of snails and other mollusks, of which, with insects, seeds, and the tender blades of grasses and other vegetables, its food consists. It rarely takes wing, scarcely ever indeed unless forced to do so.

The sexes, which are precisely alike, may be thus described :—

Head and all the under surface dark slate-grey, becoming nearly white on the chin; back, wing-coverts and tertiaries rich deep reddish brown; bill black; irides and eyelash bright red; feet and legs dull brick-red.

The figures are of the natural size.