

RALLUS LEWINII, Swains.

Lewin's Water Rail.

Rallus brachipus, Swains. An. in Menag., p. 336.

—— *Lewinii*, Swains., Ibid. p. 336.

—— *brachipus*, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 115.

IN Van Diemen's Land this species is very abundant in all low marshy situations, lagoons, and the rushy banks of rivers; it occurs on most of the small islands in D'Entrecasteaux' Channel; I have also seen specimens from Southern and Western Australia which are precisely similar in their markings, and only differ in being somewhat larger.

Mr. Swainson has evidently described this bird under two names, those of *brachipus* and *Lewinii*, and I am induced to adopt the latter, which, as he observes, is a just memorial of the first author of a work on the Birds of Australia, in preference to the former, because I find the shortness of the nails and consequent apparent shortness of the toes, which must have suggested the appellation, to be common only to those birds which inhabit the small islands, where, from the hard and stony nature of the ground they have to traverse, the nails become much worn and blunted, while those of the birds inhabiting the main-land and resorting more exclusively to the soft sedgy banks of rivers remain intact.

It is very closely allied to the Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) of Europe, and its habits, manners and mode of life closely resemble those of that bird.

The stomach is rather muscular and the food consists of aquatic insects, small mollusks, &c.

A nest I found in a lagoon near the river Derwent in Van Diemen's Land was formed of flags and other aquatic vegetables, placed in a low tuft of rushes, and contained two eggs one inch and a quarter in length by seven-eighths of an inch in breadth, and of a pale olive-colour blotched all over, but particularly at the larger end, with reddish and dark brown.

The male has the head and sides of the neck rufous, striated with black on the crown and down the nape; all the upper surface and tail black striped with olive; wings, flanks and abdomen banded broadly with black and narrowly with white; chin white; centre of the throat, breast and abdomen slate-grey; vent buff; bill brownish red; irides hazel; feet flesh-colour, becoming darker about the toes.

The female is similar, but not so bright in colour.

The young is destitute of the red hue on the neck, has only a trace of the barring on the flanks and abdomen, and the barring of the wings much less distinct than in the male.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the size of life.