

GALLINULA TENEBROSA, *Gould.*

Sombre Gallinule.

Gallinula tenebrosa, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Feb. 24, 1846.

THIS species of Gallinule inhabits the sedgy banks of rivers, creeks and water-holes. I frequently encountered it in New South Wales, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Upper Hunter; and I also possess specimens collected on the banks of the Murray in South Australia. The total absence of any white marks on the flanks forms a good specific character, and at once distinguishes this Gallinule from most of the other members of the genus. In size it considerably exceeds the *Gallinula chloropus* of Europe; and that gartered above the knee is still more brilliant, coloured with red and yellow. Both on the open muddy banks and among the tangled herbage of the water's edge, it readily eludes pursuit by running with great swiftness into a place of safety. It swims with considerable ease and buoyancy, and while gliding over the quiet surface of the water, seeks its food, which consists of various aquatic insects and small-shelled mollusks, among the floating herbage.

On comparing the sexes, I find, that, like the European species, they differ in size, and that although the female is smaller than her mate, the colours of her bill are often brighter than in the male.

So completely do the habits and economy of this species resemble those of the other members of the genus, that a repetition of what has been so frequently described is quite unnecessary.

The whole of the plumage greyish black, with the exception of the back and scapularies, which are deep brown, and the primaries and tail, which are nearly a pure black; under tail-coverts black in the centre and white on the sides; frontal plate orange; base of the bill blood-red, tip greenish yellow; above the knee a garter of yellow and scarlet; joints of the legs and feet green; under surface of the legs and feet olive; sides of the tarsi and frontal plates of the toes yellow; frontal plates of the tarsi yellow, those nearest the knee stained with scarlet; irides olive.

The figure in the accompanying Plate is a trifle smaller than the natural size, and was taken from a female.