

HERODIAS GREYI, *Gray.*

White Reef Heron.

Herodias Greyi, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 80.

This species of Heron is abundantly dispersed over the whole of the northern and eastern coasts of Australia wherever low islands and reefs of coral running parallel to those coasts are found to exist. It presents so many points of similarity in size and in form to the *H. jugularis*, that I have long been of opinion that it is merely an albino variety of that species, an opinion which I find has been entertained by others as well as myself; and although Mr. McGillivray states that they are distinct, I have a latent suspicion that such is not the case. The bird did not come under my own observation, but was often seen by Mr. McGillivray while on the surveying voyage of H.M.S. Fly, and to him I am indebted for the following observations:—

“From the circumstance of my having always found this and the dark-coloured species” (*H. jugularis*) “in company, I considered them as the same bird in different states of plumage, their size and proportions being so similar, and was surprised that individuals exhibiting a change from blue to white or *vice versâ* never occurred. At length, while on Dugong Island, I was convinced they were specifically distinct by seeing that the half-grown young from the nest had assumed the distinctive colour of the parents. This was first pointed out to me by Dr. Muirhead, R.N., whose attention I had previously drawn to the subject. The habits of both species are similar; and they procure their food in the same manner at low water on the coral reefs surrounding the low islands they frequent. The nest and eggs are precisely similar, but the young of this bird is white from the nest.”

The entire plumage snow-white; bill yellowish straw-colour, with a dusky tinge on the culmen and towards the point; irides primrose-yellow; eyelids bright yellow; lores and orbits dull greenish; legs and feet yellowish green; soles orange; claws pale horn-colour; hind one dark; anterior plates of the toes bluish black.

The figure is about three-fourths of the natural size.