

ARDEA RECTIROSTRIS.

Great-billed Heron.

Ardea rectirostris, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part XI. p. 22.

Oo-loo-mung-a, Aborigines of Port Essington, Gilbert.

Maitch, Aborigines of Port Essington, McGillivray.

THE only part of Australia in which this bird has been seen is the Cobourg Peninsula on the north coast, where Mr. Gilbert found it breeding on the 5th of February. He states that it is solitary in its habits, and is only to be found in the most secluded creeks or in the open spaces among the mangroves. Mr. McGillivray observed it at Port Essington, but could not obtain any information respecting it. A fine adult specimen was procured by Dr. Sibbald, R.N., and Mr. McGillivray was so fortunate as to kill a young bird in a large mangrove swamp at the head of a bay called Wān-mān-mēma : it was exceedingly shy and watchful of his motions, and he had great difficulty in getting even a long shot at it.

The nest observed by Mr. Gilbert was built in an upright fork of a large and lofty *Melaleuca* at about eighty feet from the ground, and was formed of an outer layer of very strong sticks, with a few small twigs as a lining, and contained two eggs of a light ash-grey.

The bird when discovered appeared very reluctant to leave the nest, and instead of the harsh croak usually uttered by it, emitted on this occasion a note drawn out to a considerable length, and at times resembling distant thunder, which was suddenly changed to a sound very like the groan of a person in extreme agony.

Mr. Gilbert unfortunately failed in procuring the adults ; and a young bird is all of this species contained in my collection : an adult male may be found in that of the British Museum.

The stomach is membranous, and the food consists of fish.

Head, neck and all the upper surface vinous brown, a few of the back feathers with a faint line of white down the centre, and the primaries and tail washed with grey ; chin white ; front of the neck and all the under surface greyish brown, the lengthened plumes on the lower part of the neck and chest with a stripe of white down the centre ; irides yellow ; bill blackish brown ; basal half of the lower mandible yellowish white, apical half yellow ; legs and feet dark greenish grey ; hinder part of the tarsi and inside of the feet yellowish grey.

The figure represents the adult about half the natural size.