

## NUMENIUS AUSTRALIS, *Gould.*

### Australian Curlew.

*Numenius Australis*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 155.

*Wid-joo-on-ong*, Aborigines of the Murray River, Western Australia.

*Mán-do-weidt*, Aborigines of Port Essington.

*Curlew*, of the Colonists.

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IN investigating the ornithology of any part of the world we find many instances of species so closely resembling others, known to be inhabitants of distant countries, that they at first sight appear to be identical, but on a more careful comparison and examination they prove to be merely representatives; in no case however is this law of representation, for such it must be called, so decidedly marked as in Australia, where not a few, but numerous, instances occur of birds so closely resembling others peculiar to Europe and Northern India, that they appear to be the same; and the present bird may be cited as a case in point, for a casual observer would at once pronounce it to be the Common Curlew of Europe; on comparison, however, it is found to differ from that species in having a longer bill, in the rump and upper tail-coverts being barred with brown instead of white, and in the under surface being washed with buff.

The range of this species over Australia appears to be universal, for I have received specimens from Port Essington, Swan River, South Australia, New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, and all the islands in Bass's Straits; but in no one of these countries is it more abundant than in Van Diemen's Land, where it is to be met with in flocks in the neighbourhood of rivers and marshy situations, uttering a very similar call, and exhibiting the same actions and manners as the Common Curlew of Europe; like that bird, it is also especially fond of running over the flats left bare by the receding tide, to feed upon the various molluscous animals abounding in such situations.

The weight of this bird is about two pounds: the stomachs of those dissected were found to be extremely muscular, and contained the remains of shelled mollusks, crabs, &c.

The breeding ground has not yet been discovered; the bird probably retires to the high lands of Van Diemen's Land or Australia Felix for that purpose.

A similarity of colouring pervades both sexes.

Crown of the head and back of the neck blackish brown, each feather margined with buff; back blackish brown, each feather irregularly blotched with reddish buff on the margins; wing-coverts blackish brown, margined with greyish white; tertiaries brown, irregularly blotched on the margins with lighter brown; rump and upper tail-coverts dark brown, barred across the margins with greyish buff; tail light brown, crossed with bars of dark brown; greater coverts blackish brown, slightly tipped with white; first five primaries dark brown with white stems, the remainder and the secondaries crossed by irregular interrupted bars of white; sides of the face, throat, and all the under surface pale buff, with a fine line of blackish brown down the centre of each feather; basal half of the bill flesh-colour tinged with olive; apical portion deep blackish brown; legs bluish lead-colour; irides dark brown.

The figure is of the natural size.