

HÆMATOPUS FULIGINOSUS, *Gould.*

Sooty Oyster-catcher.

Hæmatopus fuliginosus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc.

Mur-roo-wa-dā-ree, Aborigines of Port Essington.

Black Red-bill, Colonists of Western Australia.

Black Oyster-catcher, Colonists of New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, and Port Essington.

AFTER a careful examination and comparison of the Black Oyster-catchers of the Cape of Good Hope, Cape Horn and Australia, I find them to differ so much from each other, that I can come to no other conclusion than that they are so many distinct species, and hence I have been induced to characterize the Australian bird under the appellation of *fuliginosus*, from the sooty colouring of its plumage.

Van Diemen's Land, the islands in Bass's Straits, and the southern coast of the Australian continent generally, are the great strongholds of this species. Like its near ally it is equally abundant wherever situations occur suited to its habits and economy; low sandy beaches at the mouths of rivers, spits of land running into the sea and small islands being its favourite places of abode; and so universally is it dispersed, that, as I have stated with regard to the *H. longirostris*, it is quite unnecessary to point out particular localities where it may be found; in fact, every small island and every yard of the coasts of the countries I have mentioned are more or less visited by it. It is a strictly stationary species, breeding in the places of its usual resort; or if any change in this respect takes place, it is that, for the sake of safety and freedom from intrusion, the bird leaves the main shore and betakes itself to small rocky islands, such as those in Bass's Straits, where, exempt from annoyance of every kind, it may rear its brood in safety.

The present species is a stout-built and powerful bird, but from the sombre colouring of its plumage it is not so conspicuous and attractive as the White-breasted Oyster-catcher.

Its eggs are two in number; two inches and three quarters long by one and three quarters broad, of a light stone-colour, blotched all over with large irregular markings of dark brown, some of which appear as if beneath the surface and of a purplish hue.

It becomes exceedingly clamorous if its nest be intruded upon, frequently uttering a loud shrill call while flying backwards and forwards near its breeding-place.

The entire plumage of a uniform sooty black, slightly glossed on the neck and under surface with green; bill and eyelash extremely rich orange-yellow; irides red; legs and feet dull brick-red.

The Plate represents a male about the natural size.