

APTERYX OWENII, *Gould.*

Owen's Apteryx.

Apteryx Owenii, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part XV. p. 94.

THE acquisition of a second species of Apteryx is an evidence that our knowledge of the natural productions of New Zealand is far from complete; and as a farther proof that such is the case, I may mention that from information I have lately received, I have reason to believe that a third and much larger species of Apteryx is still living in the Southern or Middle Island; at least the sealers who annually visit those shores affirm that such a bird exists; it is known to them by the name of the Fireman, and is said to be about three feet in height. I have also been favoured by Mr. Wilson of Lydstip House with the loan of an enormous egg, larger than that of a swan, which is said to be that of the common species of Apteryx; and although it is possible that it may belong to that bird, its great size favours the belief that such is not the case, and that it is more likely to be the egg of some species with which we are unacquainted.

The single specimen from which my figure was taken was sent to me by Mr. F. Strange of Sydney; unfortunately it was unaccompanied by any information. It formed part of a small collection of New Zealand birds, but from which of the islands they had been procured was uncertain; I have some reason to believe that they were from the South Island.

It is rendered conspicuously different from the *A. Australis*, with which it accords in size, by the irregular transverse barring of the entire plumage, which, together with its extreme density and hair-like appearances, gives it more the resemblance of a mammal than of a bird; it has also a shorter, more slender and more curved bill; and the feathers also differ in structure, being broader throughout, especially at the tip, and of a loose decomposed and hair-like texture.

I have characterized this new species under the name of *Apteryx Owenii*, feeling assured that it can only be considered a just compliment to Professor Owen, who has so ably investigated the remains of the extinct birds of New Zealand.

Face, head and neck dull yellowish brown; throat somewhat paler; all the upper surface transversely rayed with blackish brown and fulvous, each individual feather being silvery brown at the base, darker brown in the middle, then crossed by a lunate mark of fulvous, to which succeeds an irregular mark of black, and terminated with fulvous; under surface paler than the upper, caused by each feather being crossed by three rays of fulvous instead of two, and more largely tipped with that colour; the feathers of the thighs resemble those of the back; bill dull yellowish horn-colour; feet and claws fleshy brown.

The figure is of the natural size.