

to admit their bodies, and to throw out the earth between their legs; by grubbing with their fingers alone they are enabled to follow the direction of the hole with greater certainty, which will sometimes, at a depth of several feet, turn off abruptly at right angles, its direct course being obstructed by a clump of wood or some other impediment. Their patience is, however, often put to severe trials. In the present instance the native dug down six times in succession to a depth of at least six or seven feet without finding an egg, and at the last attempt came up in such a state of exhaustion that he refused to try again; but my interest was now too much excited to relinquish the opportunity of verifying the native's statements, and by the offer of an additional reward I induced him to try again: this seventh trial proved successful, and my gratification was complete, when the native with equal pride and satisfaction held up an egg, and after two or three more attempts produced a second; thus proving how cautious Europeans should be of disregarding the narratives of these poor children of nature, because they happen to sound extraordinary or different from anything with which they were previously acquainted.

"I revisited Knocker's Bay on the tenth of February, and having with some difficulty penetrated into a dense thicket of cane-like creeping plants, I suddenly found myself beside a mound of gigantic proportions. It was fifteen feet in height and sixty in circumference at the base, the upper part being about a third less, and was entirely composed of the richest description of light vegetable mould; on the top were very recent marks of the bird's feet. The native and myself immediately set to work, and after an hour's extreme labour, rendered the more fatiguing from the excessive heat, and the tormenting attacks of myriads of mosquitoes and sand-flies, I succeeded in obtaining an egg from a depth of about five feet; it was in a perpendicular position, with the earth surrounding and very lightly touching it on all sides, and without any other material to impart warmth, which in fact did not appear necessary, the mound being quite warm to the hands. The holes in this mound commenced at the outer edge of the summit, and ran down obliquely towards the centre; their direction therefore is not uniform. Like the majority of the mounds I have seen, this was so enveloped in thickly foliated trees as to preclude the possibility of the sun's rays reaching any part of it.

"The mounds differ very much in their composition, form and situation: most of those that are placed near the water's edge were formed of sand and shells without a vestige of any other material, but in some of them I met with a portion of soil and decaying wood; when constructed of this loose material they are very irregular in outline, and often resemble a bank thrown up by a constant heavy surf. One remarkable specimen of this description, situated on the southern side of Knocker's Bay, has the appearance of a bank, from twenty-five to thirty feet in length, with an average height of five feet; another even more singular is situated at the head of the harbour, and is composed entirely of pebbly iron-stone, resembling a confused heap of sifted gravel; into this I dug to the depth of two or three feet without finding any change of character; it may have been conical originally, but is now without any regularity, and is very extensive, covering a space of at least a hundred and fifty feet in circumference. These remarkable specimens would, however, seem to be exceptions, as by far the greater number are entirely formed of light black vegetable soil, are of a conical form, and are situated in the densest thickets. Occasionally the mounds are met with in barren, rocky and sandy situations, where not a particle of soil similar to that of which they are composed occurs for miles around: how the soil is produced in such situations appears unaccountable; it has been said that the parent birds bring it from a great distance; but as we have seen that they readily adapt themselves to the difference of situation, this is scarcely probable: I conceive that they collect the dead leaves and other vegetable matter that may be at hand, and which decomposing forms this particular description of soil. The mounds are doubtless the work of many years, and of many birds in succession; some of them are evidently very ancient, trees being often seen growing from their sides; in one instance I found a tree growing from the middle of a mound which was a foot in diameter. I endeavoured to glean from the natives how the young effect their escape; but on this point they do not agree; some asserting that they find their way unaided; others on the contrary affirmed that the old birds, knowing when the young are ready to emerge from their confinement, scratch down and release them.

"The natives say that only a single pair of birds are ever found at one mound at a time, and such, judging from my own observation, I believe to be the case; they also affirm that the eggs are deposited at night, at intervals of several days, and this I also believe to be correct, as four eggs taken on the same day, and from the same mound, contained young in different stages of development; and the fact that they are always placed perpendicularly is established by the concurring testimony of all the different tribes of natives I have questioned on the subject.

"The Jungle-fowl is almost exclusively confined to the dense thickets immediately adjacent to the sea-beach; it appears never to go far inland, except along the banks of creeks. It is always met with in pairs or quite solitary, and feeds on the ground, its food consisting of roots, which its powerful claws enable it to scratch up with the utmost facility, and also of seeds, berries and insects, particularly the larger species of coleoptera.

"It is at all times a very difficult bird to procure; for although the rustling noise produced by its stiff pinions when flying may be frequently heard, the bird itself is seldom to be seen. Its flight is heavy and unsustained in the extreme; when first disturbed it invariably flies to a tree, and on alighting stretches out its head and neck in a straight line with its body, remaining in this position as stationary and motionless as the branch upon which it is perched; if, however, it becomes fairly alarmed, it takes a horizontal but laborious flight for about a hundred yards, with its legs hanging down as if broken. I did not myself detect any note or cry; but from the natives' description and imitation of it, it much resembles the clucking of the domestic fowl, ending with a scream like that of the peacock.

"I observed that the birds continued to lay from the latter part of August to March, when I left that part of the country; and, according to the testimony of the natives, there is only an interval of about four or five months, the driest and hottest part of the year, between their seasons of incubation. The composition of the mound appears to influence the colouring of a thin epidermis with which the eggs are covered, and which readily chips off, showing the true shell to be white; those deposited in the black soil are always of a dark reddish brown, while those from the sandy hillocks near the beach are of a dirty yellowish white; they differ a good deal in size, but in form they all assimilate, both ends being equal; they are three inches and five lines long by two inches and three lines broad."

Head and crest very deep cinnamon-brown; back of the neck and all the under surface very dark gray; back and wings cinnamon-brown; upper and under tail-coverts dark chestnut-brown; tail blackish brown; irides generally dark brown, but in some specimens light reddish brown; bill reddish brown, with yellow edges; tarsi and feet bright orange, the scales on the front of the tarsi from the fourth downwards, and the scales of the toes dark reddish brown,

The figure is about one-fifth less than the natural size.