

MACROPYGIA PHASIANELLA.

Pheasant-tailed Pigeon.

Columba Phasianella, Temm. Pl. Col. 100.

From what I could personally observe during my residence in New South Wales, the Pheasant-tailed Pigeon resorts entirely to the brushes, as in no instance did I ever meet with it in the open parts of the country. From Illawarra to Moreton Bay it is a common and stationary species. It is a fine showy bird in a state of nature, and exhibits itself to great advantage when it rises from the ground to the trees, with its large and long tail spread to its greatest extent. While traversing the brushes I have frequently come upon this bird quite unawares, when busily engaged searching on the ground for fallen seeds and berries. Rarely were more than four or five collected together at one time, and most frequently it occurred singly or in pairs. Up to the present time, our knowledge of the extent of habitat enjoyed by this bird is very limited; I have never myself seen it in any collections but those made in New South Wales; other nearly allied species are found in Java and Amboina, and doubtless there are many others yet to be discovered, since from the recluse habits of the birds forming the present genus, they may be very easily overlooked. As its lengthened tarsi would lead us to imagine, it spends much of its time on the ground, while its broad and voluminous tail equally indicates that this organ is displayed to the greatest advantage amongst the branches, and in both instances such is really the case; when flushed from the ground in the depths of the forest it merely flies to the branch of some low shrub-like tree, and there remains with little appearance of fear.

The sexes are precisely similar in colour and nearly so in size; dissection, in fact, is necessary to distinguish them.

Its note is loud, mournful and monotonous.

General plumage rich rusty brown, becoming of a dark brown on the wings; wing-coverts margined with rusty brown; ear-coverts crossed by narrow bars of black; sides and back of the neck glossed with bronzy purple; lateral tail-feathers crossed near the tip by a broad band of black, beyond which the brown colour is paler than at the base; bill dark olive-brown, mealy at the base; irides blue, with an outer circle of scarlet; orbits mealy bluish lilac; feet pink-red.

The figure is of the natural size.