

GEOPELIA HUMERALIS.

Barred-shouldered Ground-Dove.

Columba humeralis, Temm. Pl. Col. 191.

Mangrove Pigeon, resident at Port Essington.

THERE are reasons for believing that the *Geopelia humeralis* inhabits the whole of the vast interior of Australia as well as the neighbourhood of the coasts of its northern and eastern portions. In New South Wales it is sparingly dispersed over the Liverpool Plains, where some of the specimens I possess were obtained, while others were procured at Port Essington. As the structure of its legs would indicate, it passes much of its time on the ground, feeding on the seeds of various kinds of grasses and leguminous plants. Not only is it one of the most elegant of the Dove tribe inhabiting Australia, but it is also one of the most tame and docile, if I may judge from the few I observed on the heated plains of New South Wales: their confidence was such that they sometimes perched within two yards of the spot where I was sitting; extreme thirst and a scanty supply of water may, however, have rendered them more tame and bold than they otherwise would have been.

Mr. Gilbert states that at Port Essington "this Pigeon is extremely abundant, inhabiting thickets, swampy grounds, and the banks of running streams. It mostly feeds on the seeds of various kinds of grasses, but when the country becomes burnt it finds an abundant supply of berries in the thickets. It may often be seen among the mangroves in flocks of several hundreds, and hence its colonial name of Mangrove Pigeon. It was equally numerous during the whole period of my stay in that part of the country. Any number of specimens may be readily procured, for when disturbed the bird merely flits from branch to branch, or if in an open part of the country to the nearest tree. I did not on any occasion observe it take anything approaching a sustained flight. Its most common note is a rather loud *coo-coo*, occasionally uttered at long intervals; during the pairing-season the note becomes of a softer tone, and is more rapidly repeated, and its actions very much resemble those of the Domestic Pigeon of Europe. It breeds in August, and makes a very slight nest of slender twigs, loosely and carelessly laid across each other on two or three of the lower leaves of the *Pandanus*, the upper leaves of which afford it a shelter from the rays of the sun, and from the rain; the eggs are two in number of a delicate fleshy-white."

The sexes are alike in colouring.

Forehead, cheeks, sides of the neck and breast delicate grey; occiput, back, wing-coverts, rump and upper tail-coverts silky brown; back of the neck rufous, every feather of the upper surface bounded at the extremity with a narrow band of black, giving the whole a squamated or scaled appearance; under surface of the shoulder and the inner webs, except their tips, of the primaries and secondaries fine rust-red; outer webs and tips of the inner webs of the primaries and secondaries brown; two centre tail-feathers dark grey, the remainder reddish brown at the base, gradually increasing in intensity towards their tips, those next the centre ones washed with grey on their outer webs, and all but the centre ones largely tipped with white; centre of the abdomen white; the remainder of the under surface washed with vinous; irides ochre-yellow; bill and nostrils delicate mealy light blue; naked skin round the eye mealy purple; legs and feet pink red.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size.