

OCYPHAPS LOPHOTES.

Crested Pigeon.

Columba Lophotes, Temm. Pl. Col. 142.—Wagl. Syst. Av. Columba, sp. 103.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 289. pl. 34.

The Crested Pigeon of the Marshes, Sturt's two Exp. to the interior of Southern Australia, vol. i. pl. in p. 24.
Turtur? Lophotes, Selby, Nat. Lib. Orn., vol. v. Pigeons, p. 174. pl. 18.

THE chasteness of its colouring, the extreme elegance of its form, and the graceful crest which flows backwards from its occiput, all tend to render this Pigeon one of the most lovely of its tribe inhabiting Australia, and in fact I consider it is not surpassed in beauty by any other from any part of the world. It is to be regretted, that owing to its being exclusively an inhabitant of the plains of the interior, it can never become an object of general observation; but, like the *Peristera histrionica* and *Geophaps scripta*, it can only be seen by those of our enterprising countrymen whose love of exploring new countries prompts them to leave for a time the haunts of civilized man to wander among the wilds of the distant interior, a portion of the country never to be regarded as solitary or uninteresting by those who look with admiration upon the wonderful works of their Creator: the fauna of the interior of Australia has in fact, as I have frequently had occasion to remark in the course of the present work, features peculiarly its own, and its members are eminently interesting both for their novelty and for the beauty and elegance of their form.

As might be supposed, this bird has attracted the notice of all our travellers who have journeyed across the colonial line of demarcation; Captain Sturt mentions it as being numerous on the plains of Wellington valley, and in the neighbourhood of the Morumbidgee. It would seem to affect marshy situations in preference to others, for Captain Sturt observes that he took its appearance to be a sure sign of his approach to a country more than ordinarily subject to overflow; since, on the Macquarie and the Darling, those birds were only found to inhabit the regions of marshes, or spaces covered by the *Acacia pendula* or the *Polygonum junceum*. The locality nearest the coast line that I know it to inhabit, is the country near the great bend of the river Murray in South Australia, where it is tolerably abundant; it abounds on the plains at the back of Moreton Bay on the banks of the river Namoi, and is occasionally, but very rarely, seen on the Liverpool Plains. It frequently assembles in very large flocks, and when it visits the lagoons or river-sides for water, during the dry seasons, generally selects a single tree, or even a particular branch, on which to congregate; very great numbers perching side by side, and all descending simultaneously to drink: so closely are they packed while thus engaged, that I have heard of dozens of them being killed by the single discharge of a gun.

Its powers of flight are so rapid as to be unequalled by those of any member of the group to which it belongs; an impetus being acquired by a few quick flaps of the wings, it goes skimming off apparently without any further movement of the pinions. Upon alighting on a branch it elevates its tail and throws back its head, so as to bring them nearly together, at the same time erecting its crest and showing itself off to the utmost advantage.

I met with the nest of this species in a low tree, on the great plain near Gundermein on the Lower Namoi, on the twenty-third of December 1839; like that of the other species of Pigeon, it was a slight structure of small twigs, and contained two white eggs, which were one inch and a quarter long and nearly an inch broad, upon which the female was then sitting.

The sexes are alike in plumage.

Head, face, throat, breast and abdomen grey; lengthened occipital plumes black; back of the neck, back, rump, flanks, upper and under tail-coverts light olive-brown; the upper tail-coverts tipped with white; sides of the neck washed with pinky salmon-colour; feathers covering the insertion of the wing deep buff, each crossed near the tip with a line of deep black, giving this part of the plumage a barred appearance; greater wing-coverts shining bronzy green, margined with white; primaries brown, becoming of a deeper tint as they approach the body; the third, fourth and fifth finely margined on the apical half of their external web with brownish white, the remainder with a narrow line of white bounding the extremities of both webs; secondaries brown on their inner webs, bronzy purple on their outer webs at the base, and brown at the extremity, broadly margined with white; two centre tail-feathers brown, the remainder blackish brown, glossed with green on their outer webs, and tipped with white; irides buffy orange; orbits naked, wrinkled, and of a pink-red; nostrils and base of the bill olive-black; tip black; legs and feet pink-red.

The figures are of the natural size.