

GEOPHAPS SMITHII.

Smith's Partridge Bronze-wing.

Columba Smithii, Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 104.

Mān-ga, Aborigines of the Cobourg Peninsula.

Partridge Pigeon, Residents of Port Essington.

IN structure this species is in every respect a true *Geophaps*, and the accompanying notes by Mr. Gilbert show that it as closely assimilates in its habits and economy to the type of the genus as it well can. It appears to be abundant on the north coast of Australia, which is the only part of the country from which I have yet received it.

“ This bird,” says Mr. Gilbert, “ which at Port Essington is termed the Partridge, from its habits much resembling those of that bird, exhibits a departure in several of its essential characters from the typical Pigeons. In its general habits, flight, voice, mode of incubation, and the character of its newly hatched young, it differs considerably from all its congeners. It is rather abundant in all parts of the Peninsula, is mostly seen in small families and always on the ground, unless when disturbed or alarmed ; it then usually flies into the nearest tree, generally choosing the largest part of a horizontal branch to perch upon. When it rises from the ground its flight is accompanied with a louder flapping or burring noise than I have observed in any other Pigeon.

“ Its note is a coo, so rolled out that it greatly resembles the note of the Quail, and which, like that bird, it scarcely ever utters but when on the ground, where it frequently remains stationary, allowing itself to be almost trod upon before rising. Its favourite haunts are meadows covered with short grass near water, or the edges of newly burnt brush. It would seem that this species migrates occasionally from one part of the country to another ; for during the months of September and October not a single individual was to be seen, while at the time of my arrival and for a month after they were so abundant that it was a common and daily occurrence for persons to leave the settlement for an hour or two and return with several brace ; in the latter part of November they again appeared, but were not so numerous as before ; and in the January and February following they were rarely to be met with, and then mostly in pairs inhabiting the long grasses clothing the moister parts of the meadows.

“ This bird incubates from August to October, making no nest, but merely smoothing down a small part of a clump of grass and forming a slight hollow, in which it deposits two eggs, which are greenish white, one inch and a quarter long by seven-eighths of an inch in breadth. The young bird on emerging from the egg is clothed with down like the young of the Quail.”

Eyes surrounded with a large naked space of a bright reddish orange colour ; head and all the upper surface olive-brown ; throat white, the tips of the last feathers grey, forming a surrounding margin of that colour ; on the cheeks a large brownish grey spot, nearly insulated by the large space of the eyes being surrounded by a narrow band of white, the feathers of which are tipped with black ; chest reddish brown ; on the centre of the breast a few of the feathers are clear grey, margined at the tip with black ; breast and abdomen purplish olive-brown ; flanks white ; lower part of the abdomen and vent buff ; primaries and secondaries dark brown, margined with pale brown ; the outer webs of the three or four last secondaries, and one or two greater coverts for two-thirds of their length from the base rich purple with greenish wavy reflexions ; two centre tail-feathers olive-brown, the remainder deep slate-grey at base and black at the extremity ; under tail-coverts dark brown margined with light brown ; irides of three colours, first a narrow ring of red next the pupil, then a broader ring of pure white, and lastly a narrow one of grey ; bill blackish grey ; legs and feet bluish grey ; back of the tarsi and inner side of the feet yellowish grey.

The figures are those of a male and female of the natural size.