

## TRICHOGLOSSUS SWAINSONII, *Jard. and Selb.*

### Swainson's Lorikeet.

*Perruche de Moluques*, Buff. Pl. Enl. 743.

*Blue-bellied Parrakeet*, Brown, Ill. of Zool., pl. 7.

*Blue-bellied Parrot*, White's Voy., pl. in p. 140.—Phill. Bot. Bay., pl. in p. 152.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 413. pl. 59.

*Le Perruche à tête bleue, male*, Le Vaill. Hist. des Perr., tom. i. pl. 24.

*Trichoglossus hæmatodus*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 289.

————— *multicolor*, Wagl. Mon. Psitt. in Abhand., tom. i. p. 553.

————— *Swainsonii*, Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 112.—Selb. Nat. Lib. Orn., vol. vi. Parrots, p. 153. pl. 20.—Swain. Zool. Ill. 2nd Ser., vol. ii. pl. 92.—Ib. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 304.

*Warrin*, Aborigines of New South Wales.

THIS beautiful Lorikeet, so familiar to every ornithologist, has been for many years confounded with two other nearly allied species, and hence has arisen an almost inexplicable mass of confusion respecting them; their true synonymies have, however, been most ably worked out by Mr. Swainson in a paper sent by him to Sir William Jardine and Mr. Selby for insertion in their "Illustrations of Ornithology," wherein those gentlemen, fully satisfied of the justness of Mr. Swainson's observations, took an opportunity of naming this species *Swainsonii*, a tribute to the talents of that naturalist in which I most cordially participate.

The present bird, so far as is yet known, is almost exclusively an inhabitant of the south-eastern portion of the Australian continent lying between South Australia and Moreton Bay, at least I have never heard of its existence in any part westward of the former or northward of the latter. It also occurs in Van Diemen's Land, but its visits to that island do not appear to be either regular or frequent.

The flowers of the various species of *Eucalypti* furnish this bird with an abundant supply of food, and so exclusively is it confined to the forests composed of those trees, that I do not recollect to have met with it in any other. It also evinces a preference for those that are covered with newly expanded blossoms, which afford them the greatest supply of nectarine juice and pollen, upon which they principally subsist. However graphically it might be described, I scarcely believe it possible to convey an idea of the appearance of a forest of flowering gums tenanted by several species of *Trichoglossi*, *Meliphagi*, &c.; three or four species being frequently seen on the same tree, and often simultaneously attacking the pendent blossoms of the same branch. The incessant din produced by their thousand voices, and the screaming notes they emit, when a flock of either species simultaneously leave the trees for some other part of the forest, baffles all description, and must be seen and heard to be fully comprehended. So intent are the *Trichoglossi* for some time after sunrise upon extracting their honey-food, that they are not easily alarmed or made to quit the trees upon which they are feeding. The report of a gun discharged immediately beneath them has no other effect than to elicit an extra scream, or cause them to move to a neighbouring branch, where they again recommence feeding with all the avidity possible, creeping among the leaves and clinging beneath the branches in every variety of position. During one of my morning rambles in the brushes of the Hunter I came suddenly upon an immense *Eucalyptus*, which was at least two hundred feet high. The blossoms of this noble tree had attracted hundreds of birds, both Parrots and Honey-suckers; and from a single branch I killed the four species of *Trichoglossi* inhabiting the district, viz. *T. Swainsonii*, *chlorolepidotus*, *concinus* and *pusillus*. I mention this fact in proof of the perfect harmony existing between these species while feeding; a night's rest, however, and the taming effect of hunger, doubtless contributed much to this harmonious feeling, as I observed that at other periods of the day they were not so friendly.

Although the *T. Swainsonii* is so numerous in New South Wales, I did not succeed in procuring its eggs; the natives informed me that they are two in number, and that they are deposited in the holes of the largest *Eucalypti*, the period of incubation being from September to January.

Head, sides of the face and throat blue, with a lighter stripe down the centre of each feather; across the occiput a narrow band of greenish yellow; all the upper surface green, blotched at the base of the neck with scarlet and yellow; wings dark green on their outer webs; their inner webs black, crossed by a broad oblique band of bright yellow; tail green above, passing into blue on the tips of the two central feathers; under surface of the tail greenish yellow; chest crossed by a broad band, the centre of which is rich scarlet, with a few of the feathers fringed with deep blue, and the sides being rich orange-yellow margined with scarlet; under surface of the shoulder and sides of the chest deep blood-red; abdomen rich deep blue, blotched on each side with scarlet and yellow; under tail-coverts rich yellow, with an oblong patch of green at the extremity of each feather; bill blood-red, with the extreme tip yellow; nostrils and bare space round the eye brownish black; irides reddish orange, with a narrow ring of dark brown next the pupil; feet olive.

The sexes resemble each other so closely both in size and colouring that they cannot be distinguished with certainty.

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