

# LATHAMUS DISCOLOR.

## Swift Lorikeet.

*Red-shouldered Paroquet*, *Psittacus discolor*, Shaw, in White's Voy., pl. in p. 263.

*Red-shouldered Parrakeet*, Phill. Bot. Bay, pl. in p. 269.—Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., ii. p. 90.

*Psittacus discolor*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxi.—Swains. Zool. Ill., 1st Ser., pl. 62.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 176.—Shaw's Zool., vol. viii. p. 466.

*Psittacus humeralis*, Kuhl, Consp. Psitt. in Nova Acta, vol. x. p. 47.

*Psittacus Australis*, Ibid., p. 48.—Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxv. p. 342.—Ibid, Ency. Méth., 3ième Part. p. 1384.

*Perruche Banks*, Le Vaill. Hist. des Perr., p. 104, pl. 50.

*Nanodes discolor*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 276.—Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 305.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Zool., vol. xiv. p. 118.

*Euphema discolor*, Wagl. Mon. Psitt. in Abhand., vol. i. pp. 492 and 545.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, p. 52.

*Psittacus Banksianus*, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxv. p. 342.—Ibid, Ency. Méth., 3ième Part. p. 1383.

*Lathamus rubrifrons*, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 205.

*La Perruche Latham*, Le Vaill. Hist. des Perr., p. 123, pl. 62, young.

*Psittacus discolor*, Kuhl, Consp. Psitt. in Nova Acta, vol. x. p. 48, young.

*Swift Parrakeet*, Colonists of Van Diemen's Land.

No one of the Australian birds will be more deeply imprinted upon my memory than the Swift Lorikeet, associated as it is with many of the most pleasing recollections connected with my visit to that part of the world. The accompanying drawing was one of many made by Mrs. Gould in Van Diemen's Land, during a long residence in the house of the Governor, Sir John Franklin, who, together with his amiable lady, took the greatest interest in our pursuits, and rendered us every possible assistance their kind hearts and excellent dispositions could suggest.

Much confusion has hitherto existed both as regards the generic appellation and the division of the *Psittacidae* to which this elegant Lorikeet should be referred; but as I have endeavoured to clear up these points in my observations upon the genus, it is needless to repeat them here. It is a migratory species, passing the summer and breeding-season only in the more southern parts of the Australian continent and Van Diemen's Land, and retiring northward for the remainder of the year. During September and the four following months, it is not only abundant in all the gum-forests of Van Diemen's Land, but is very common in the shrubberies and gardens at Hobart Town, small flights being constantly seen passing up and down the streets, and flying in various directions over the houses. They approach close to the windows, and are even frequently to be seen on the gum-trees bordering the streets, and within a few feet of the heads of the passing inhabitants, being so intent upon gathering the honey from the fresh-blown flowers which daily expand, as almost entirely to disregard the presence of the spectator. The tree to which they are so eagerly attracted, and a branch of which is figured in the accompanying Plate, is the *Eucalyptus gibbosus*, young or cultivated specimens of which appear to have finer blossoms than those in their native forests. It is certainly the finest of the genus I have ever seen, and when its pendent branches are covered with thick clusters of pale yellow blossoms, presents a most beautiful appearance; these blossoms are so charged with saccharine matter, that the birds soon fill themselves with honey, even to their very throats: several of those I shot, upon being held up by the feet, discharged from their mouths a stream of this liquid to the amount of a dessert-spoonful or more, as clear as water. Small flocks of from four to twenty in number are also frequently to be seen passing over the town, chasing each other with the quickness of thought, and uttering at the same time a shrill screaming noise, like the Swift of Europe, whence in all probability has arisen its colonial name. Sometimes these flights appear to be taken for the sake of exercise or in the mere playfulness of disposition, while at others the birds are passing from one garden to another, or proceeding from the town to the forests at the foot of Mount Wellington, or *vice versa*. Their plumage so closely assimilates in colour to the leaves of the trees they frequent, and they moreover creep so quietly yet actively from branch to branch, clinging in every possible position, that were it not for their movements and the trembling of the leaves, it would be difficult to perceive them without a minute examination of the tree upon which they have alighted. I found them breeding about midway between Hobart Town and Brown's River, but was not fortunate enough to obtain their eggs, in consequence of the situations selected for their reception being holes in the loftiest and most inaccessible trees; they are said to be two in number, and the circumstance of my having found a fully-developed hard.