

NYMPHICUS NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ, *Wagl.*

Cockatoo Parrakeet.

Psittacus Novæ-Hollandiæ, Lath., Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 102.—Gmel. Linn., vol. i. p. 323.

Crested Parrakeet, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. i. p. 250.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 174, No. 88.—Shaw, Zool., vol. viii. p. 452.

Palæornis Novæ-Hollandiæ, Lear, Ill. Psitt. Pl. 27.

Nymphicus Novæ-Hollandiæ, Wagl., Mon. Psitt. in Abhand. &c., pp. 490 and 522.—Selb., Nat. Lib., vol. vi. Parrots, p. 186, Pl. 30.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 66.

Leptolophus auricomis, Swains. Zool. Ill. 2nd Ser. Pl. 112.—Ib. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 305.

Calopsitta Guy, Less., Ill. Zool. vol. iii. 2nd sp., Pl. 112., female.

THE interior portion of the vast continent of Australia may be said to possess a Fauna almost peculiar to itself, but of which our present knowledge is extremely limited. New forms therefore of great interest may be expected when the difficulties which the explorer has to encounter in his journey towards the centre shall be overcome. The beautiful and elegant bird forming the subject of the present Plate is one of its denizens; I have it is true seen it cross the great mountain ranges and breed on the flats between them and the sea; still this is an unusual occurrence, and the few there found compared to the thousands observed on the plains stretching from the interior side of the mountains, proves that they have as it were overstepped their natural boundary. Its range is extended over the whole of the southern portion of Australia, and being strictly a migratory bird, it makes a simultaneous movement southward to within one hundred miles of the coast in September, arriving in the York district near Swan River in Western Australia precisely at the same time that it appears on the Liverpool Plains in the eastern portion of the country. After breeding and rearing a numerous progeny, the whole again retire northwards in February and March, but to what degree of latitude towards the tropics they wend their way I have not been able satisfactorily to ascertain. I have never received it from Port Essington, or any other part in the same latitude, which, however, is no proof that it does not visit that part of the continent, since it is merely the country near the coast that has yet been traversed; in all probability it will be found at a little distance in the interior, wherever there are situations suitable to its habits, but doubtless at opposite periods to those in which it occurs in New South Wales. It would appear to be more numerous in the eastern division of Australia than in the western. During the summer of 1839 it was breeding in all the apple-tree (*Angophora*) flats on the Upper Hunter, as well as on all similar districts on the Peel, and other rivers which flow northwards. After the breeding-season is over it congregates in immense flocks before taking its departure. I have seen the ground quite covered by them while engaged in procuring food, and it was not an unusual circumstance to see hundreds together on the dead branches of the gum-trees in the neighbourhood of water, a plentiful supply of which would appear to be essential to its existence; hence we may reasonably suppose that the interior of the country is not so sterile and inhospitable as is ordinarily imagined, and that it yet may be made available for the uses of man. The Harlequin Bronzewing and the Warbling Grass Parrakeet are also denizens of that part of the country, and equally unable to exist without water.

The flight of the Cockatoo Parrakeet is even and easy, and is capable of being long protracted. When roused from the ground it flies up into the nearest tree, almost invariably selecting a dead branch, upon which it frequently perches lengthwise. It is by no means a shy bird, so that any number may be shot: from the circumstance of its being excellent eating many are annually killed for the purposes of the table. Its form admirably adapts it for terrestrial progression, hence it is enabled readily to procure the seeds of the various grasses, upon which it almost solely subsists.

As a cage-bird this species is particularly interesting, becoming readily domesticated, playful and amusing. The accompanying Plate is from a beautiful drawing made by Mr. Lear, from two living birds in the possession of the Countess of Mountcharles.

Considerable difference exists in the plumage of the sexes, the tail-feathers of the male being entirely destitute of the transverse bars which adorn those of the other sex.

It breeds in the holes of gum and other trees growing on the flats and in the neighbourhood of water. The eggs are white, five or six in number, one inch long by three quarters of an inch broad.

The male has the forehead, crest and cheeks lemon yellow; ear-coverts rich reddish orange; back of the neck, two centre tail-feathers, and the external margins of the primaries brownish grey; back, shoulders, all the under surface and outer tail-feathers greyish chocolate brown, the shoulders and flanks being the darkest; a white mark extends from the shoulders lengthwise down the centre of the wing; irides dark brown; bill bluish lead-colour, lighter on the under side of the lower mandible; legs and feet bluish grey.

The female differs from the male in the colour of the face and crest being of a dull olive yellow, the latter becoming still darker at its extremity; in having the throat greyish brown, and the back lighter than in the male; the lower part of the abdomen, upper tail-coverts, yellow; four middle tail-feathers grey, the remainder yellow, the whole transversely and irregularly barred with lines of brown, with the exception of the outer web of the outer feather on each side, which is pure yellow.

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