

PLATYCERCUS BROWNII, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Brown's Parrakeet.

Psittacus Brownii, Temm. in Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. p. 119.

Psittacus venustus, Kuhl, Nov. Acta, vol. x. p. 52.

Brown's Parrot, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 139.

Platycercus Brownii, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 282.—Lear's Ill. Psitt., pl. 20.

Moon-dark? Aborigines of Port Essington.

Smutty Parrot, Residents at ditto.

THIS is a very abundant species on the northern and north-western coast of Australia, inhabiting grassy meadow-like land and the edges of swamps, mostly feeding on the ground upon the seeds of grasses and other plants, sometimes single or in pairs, but more frequently in families of from ten to twenty in number. It frequently utters a rapid succession of double notes resembling '*trin-se trin-se.*' Its flight is low, somewhat rapid and zigzag, seldom farther prolonged than from tree to tree. Specimens of this bird given me by my friends Captain Grey and Mr. Bynoe from the north-west coast differ somewhat in plumage from those killed on the Cobourg Peninsula, the concentric bands on the breast are much finer, the extreme margins only of the feathers being black; I have one specimen also with the whole of the crown of the head of a deep blood-red, and others with more or less of this colour. That this kind of plumage is unusual is proved by the fact of numerous specimens from Port Essington not exhibiting it, and had I not seen others from the north-west with black crowns (with the exception of the band across the forehead), I should have regarded as specific what I now look upon as a mere local variety, or possibly a very old bird.

This beautiful species has been named after Dr. Robert Brown, as a just tribute of respect for the high reputation he has attained as a scientific botanist.

Crown of the head, lores and ear-coverts deep black; cheeks snow-white, bounded below with blue; breast and rump pale yellow, each feather slightly fringed with black; feathers of the back deep black, with a broad margin of pale yellow; wing-coverts, outer webs of the secondaries and base of the primaries rich blue, inner webs of the primaries and secondaries deep black; under tail-coverts scarlet; centre tail-feathers green at the base, passing into blue on the margins and at the tip; lateral feathers deep blue at the base of the outer webs, brown at the base of the inner webs, and then pale blue terminating in white, with black shafts; irides blackish brown; bill light horn-colour, passing into blue at the base; legs and feet blackish brown.

Young birds are similar in colour, but have all the markings dull and indistinct; as the individual approaches to maturity the breast becomes ornamented with a number of crescent-shaped markings of black and pale yellow, and as the bird advances in age the yellow increases in extent and the black nearly disappears.

The three figures in the Plate represent two males and a female; the crimson-headed bird drawn from a specimen collected on the north-west coast, and the other male from one procured at Port Essington; they are all of the natural size.