

## PLATYCERCUS ICTEROTIS, *Wagl.*

### The Earl of Derby's Parrakeet.

*Psittacus icterotis*, Temm. in Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. p. 120.—Kuhl, Consp. Psitt. in Nova Acta, etc., p. 54. no. 86.

*Platycercus Stanleyii*, Vig. in Zool. Journ. 1830, p. 274.

——— *icterotis*, Wagl. Mon. Psitt. in Abhand. etc., p. 530.—Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia.

*Platycercus icterodes*, Bourj. St. Hil. Supp. to Le Vaill. Hist. Nat. des Perr., pl. 30.

*Goôtd-un-goôtd-un*, Aborigines of the lowland, and

*Moÿ-a-duk*, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

*Rose-hill* of the Colonists.

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THIS beautiful little Parrakeet was first made known to science by M. Temminck, who described it under the name of *Psittacus icterotis*; which fact could not have been known to the late Mr. Vigors when he named it *Platycercus Stanleyii*, as a tribute of respect to the present Earl of Derby, at that time Lord Stanley; a tribute so merited, that I cannot but regret the necessity of depriving the bird of this distinctive appellation, and of restoring to it that of *icterotis*, as bound by justice to the first describer. But in still associating his Lordship's name with this species, in the form of an English appellation, I feel I shall have the acquiescence of all ornithologists.

From the little that is known of the history of this species it would appear that its range is very limited, the colony of Swan River in Western Australia being the only locality in which it has as yet been seen in a state of nature; there, however, it is one of the most common birds of the country, and, except in the breeding-season, may always be seen in large flocks, which approach so near to the houses of the settlers as frequently to visit their gardens and ploughed lands. It generally feeds on the ground, on the seeds of various kinds of grasses and the scattered grain of the farmer; but not unfrequently attacks and deals destruction among the ripe fruits of his garden, especially if they be left unprotected.

If my readers wish to form an idea of the scenery of Australia, they must imagine a country the climate of which is second to no other, clothed with flowering trees and shrubs of the greatest beauty, and enlivened with flocks of hundreds of the attractive bird figured on the accompanying Plate, and numerous other members of the genus of equal beauty, together with the fire-breasted Robins, the lovely *Mahuri*, with their resplendent metallic plumage, and many more of the feathered tribes conspicuous for the brilliancy of their hues and the elegance of their forms: they will then have some slight conception of the enchanting scene which it presents.

Like most other members of the genus, the *Platycercus icterotis* offers no difference in the colouring of the sexes of the same age. They do not acquire the adult plumage until the second year; during the first year they are green, which colour gradually gives place to the fine colouring of maturity.

Its flight is of short duration, and consists of a series of rather rapid undulating sweeps.

Its note is a feeble, piping kind of whistle, which is occasionally so much varied and lengthened as almost to assume the character of a song.

The eggs, which are six or seven in number and of a white colour, are eleven lines long and nine and a half lines broad; they are deposited in the holes of large trees without any nest.

Crown of the head and back of the neck, chest and all the under surface scarlet; cheeks and thighs yellow; feathers of the back black, bordered with green, yellow, and in some instances scarlet; rump and upper tail-coverts yellowish green; shoulders and outer edges of the primaries blue, the inner webs and tips of the latter blackish brown; two middle tail-feathers green; the remaining feathers light blue tipped with white, with the basal portion of a darker blue tinged with green; bill light horn-colour; feet and legs dull ashy brown; irides blackish brown.

The young birds of both sexes are nearly of a uniform green, becoming parti-coloured as they advance in age; the scarlet of the crown and abdomen, and the yellow of the cheeks gradually taking the place of the green colouring of youth.

It is questionable whether the female, like the female of *P. eximius*, ever attains the fine plumage of the male.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.