

PLATYCERCUS PENNANTII.

Pennant's Parrakeet.

Psittacus Pennantii, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 90.

——— *gloriosus*, Shaw, Nat. Misc., pl. 53.

——— *splendidus*, Shaw, Mus., Lev. pl. 7. p. 27.

Perruche à large queue, Le Vaill. Hist. Nat. des Perr., pls. 78, 79.

Pennantian Parrot, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. i. p. 61; vol. ii. p. 83.—Phill. Bot. Bay, pl. in p. 154.—White's Journ., pl. in pp. 174, 175.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 410. pl. 56.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 131.

Psittacus elegans, Gmel. Syst. Nat., vol. i. p. 318.—Kuhl, Consp. Psitt. in Nova Acta, vol. x. p. 55.

Platycercus Pennantii, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 280.—Wagl. Mon. Psitt. in Abhand. p. 535. pl. 17.—Selb. in Nat. Lib. Orn., vol. vi. Parrots, p. 173. pl. 25.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 208.—Less.

Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 146.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit. p. 66.

Dulang and *Julang*, Aborigines of New South Wales.

THIS beautiful bird is very generally dispersed over New South Wales, where it inhabits grassy hills and brushes, particularly those of the Liverpool range and all similar districts. Its food consists of berries and the seeds of various grasses, to obtain which it descends in small companies to the bases of the hills and to the open glades; I have often flushed it from such situations, and when six or eight rose together with outspread tails of beautiful pale blue, offering a decided contrast to the rich scarlet livery of the body, I could never fail to pause and admire the splendour of their appearance, of which no description can give an adequate idea; the *Platycerci* must, in fact, be seen in their native wilds before their beautiful appearance can be appreciated, or the interesting nature of their habits at all understood. Although I have stated that New South Wales is the true habitat of this bird, I must not fail to record that individuals have come under my notice which had been killed in Norfolk Island; I am led to believe, however, that the bird must have been taken thither from New South Wales, and that a sufficient number had either escaped or been let loose to establish a breed. The habitats of the various *Platycerci* are generally very restricted; it is not probable therefore that the range of this species extends to an island several hundred miles distant from the main land; how far it may range along the south coast, or to the eastward and northward of New South Wales, I have never satisfactorily ascertained; I have seen it from Kangaroo Island, but I never met with it in the belts of the Murray, or in any of the forests round Adelaide, its place in that part of the country being supplied by the *Platycercus Adelaidæ*.

As I have said, the food of this species principally consists of berries and grass-seeds, but insects appear occasionally to form a part of its diet, as I found the crop of one specimen filled with small caterpillars; it was, however, a solitary occurrence.

Like the other members of the genus, the *Platycercus Pennantii* runs rapidly over the ground, but its flight is neither rapid nor enduring. In disposition it is tame and destitute of distrust, and as a pet for the aviary or a cage, few birds can exceed it in interest or beauty; consequently it is one of the commonest of the living parrakeets sent from Australia to this country.

It breeds in the holes of the large gum-trees, generally selecting those on the hill-sides within the brushes; and of such situations, the cedar brushes of the Liverpool range appear to be a favourite locality. The months of September, October and November constitute the breeding season. It makes no nest, but deposits its eggs, which are white, about an inch and two lines long, eleven and a half lines broad, and from four to seven in number, on the rotten wood at the bottom of the hole.

The colouring of the sexes when fully adult is alike, but much variation exists between youth and maturity; during the first autumn the young birds are clothed in a plumage of a nearly uniform green; to this succeeds a parti-coloured livery of scarlet, blue and green, which colouring is continually changing until the full plumage of maturity is assumed; and hence has arisen no little confusion respecting this species in the writings of the older ornithologists, and it is not to be wondered at that its synonyms are so numerous.

The adult male has the head, neck, all the under surface, the rump and upper tail-coverts rich deep crimson-red; the feathers of the back and scapularies black, broadly margined with rich crimson-red; the cheeks and shoulders coerulean blue; the greater wing-coverts pale blue; the primaries and secondaries black, with the basal half of their external webs margined with deep blue; the two centre tail-feathers green, passing into blue on their margins and at the tip; the remainder black on the inner webs for three-fourths of their length; deep blue for nearly the same length on their outer webs, and largely tipped on both webs with pale blue, which becomes still paler to the tips of the feathers; bill horn-colour; irides very dark brown; feet blackish brown.

The young vary so much, that to give an accurate description is almost impossible; one now before me has the crown of the head, sides of the neck, centre of the breast, abdomen, rump, upper and under tail-coverts deep crimson-red; the upper surface and a broad band across the breast deep grass-green; the cheeks, wings and tail similar to those parts in the adult, but much less brilliant.

The Plate represents an adult and an immature bird of the natural size.