

POLYTELIS MELANURA.

Black-tailed Parrakeet.

Palæornis melanura, Vig. in Lear's Ill. Psitt., pl. 28, male.

———— *anthopeplus*, Vig. in Ib., pl. 29, female.

Polytelis melanura, Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

Wouk-un-ga, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

Jul-ü-up, Aborigines of King George's Sound.

Mountain Parrot, Colonists of Western Australia.

So little is known of the habits and economy of this beautiful Parrakeet, which has hitherto only been found on the southern portion of the continent of Australia, that the present paper must necessarily be brief. It is strictly an inhabitant of the interior, over which it doubtless ranges widely. Captain Sturt found it on the banks of the Murray, and has given a figure of it in the narrative of his journeys into the interior; His Excellency Governor Grey procured it in the dense scrub to the north-west of Adelaide, and Mr. Gilbert encountered it in the white-gum forests of the Swan River settlement. The extent of its range northward must be left for future researches to determine. Captain Sturt at page 188 of his second volume says, "I believe I have already mentioned that shortly after we first entered the Murray, flocks of a new Paroquet passed over our heads, apparently emigrating to the N.W. They always kept too high to be fired at, but on our return, hereabouts, we succeeded in killing one. It made a good addition to our scanty stock of subjects of natural history." I believe I am indebted to the kindness and liberality of Captain Sturt for the identical specimen alluded to, a very fine one having been presented to me by him when I visited South Australia.

While flying it utters a loud harsh scream, which is changed into a chattering discordant tone upon alighting on the branches.

Mr. Gilbert remarks, that in Western Australia, except during the breeding-season, it is always to be met with in small families of from nine to twelve in number, feeding on seeds, buds of flowers and honey gathered from the white-gum-tree. Its flight, as indicated by its form, is rapid in the extreme. On reference to the synonyms given above, it will be seen that the late Mr. Vigors characterized the female as a distinct species from the male. Both sexes are beautifully figured in Mr. Lear's "Illustrations of the Psittacidæ," on reference to which and to the accompanying Plate, it will be seen that they differ very considerably in colour, the rich jonquil-yellow of the male giving place to dull yellowish green in the opposite sex, whence doubtless arose Mr. Vigors's error.

The male has the head, neck, shoulders, rump, and all the under surface beautiful jonquil-yellow; upper part of the back and scapularies olive; primaries and tail deep blue; several of the greater wing-coverts dull scarlet, forming a conspicuous mark on the centre of the wing; irides bright red; bill scarlet; feet ash-grey.

The female has the head, sides of the face, back of the neck, upper part of the back and scapulars dull olive-green; throat, all the under surface, rump and wing-coverts yellowish green, the latter passing into deep green on the centre of the shoulder; primaries, some of the secondaries, and the spurious wing deep blue-black, margined externally with yellowish green; the remainder of the secondaries and a few of the greater coverts deep red; two centre tail-feathers deep green, the remainder green at the base, passing into black on the inner webs; the five lateral feathers on each side margined on their inner webs and tipped with rosy red, which is broadest and most conspicuous on the two outer feathers; bill scarlet; feet ash-grey.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.