

PTILORHIS VICTORIÆ, Gould.

Queen Victoria's Rifle-bird.

Ptilorhis victoriæ, Gould, P. Z. S. 1849, p. 111, pl. 12.—Id. B. Austr., Suppl. pl. 50 (1851).—Id. Handb. B. Austr. i. p. 593 (1865).—Reichenb. Handb. Scansoriæ, p. 329, Taf. dxx. figs. 4086–88 (1853).—Elliot, P. Z. S. 1871, p. 682.—Id. Monogr. Parad. pl. xxvi. (1873).—Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. iii. p. 155 (1877).—Masters, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. W. i. p. 57 (1877).—Ramsay, op. cit. ii. p. 191 (1878).—Eudes-Deslongchamps, Ann. Mus. Caen, i. p. 9 (1880).—A. J. Campbell, Victorian Naturalist, ii. p. 165 (1887).—Ramsay, Tab. List Austr. B. p. 11 (1888).—Cairn & Grant, Rec. Austr. Mus. i. p. 27 (1890).—Campbell, Vict. Nat. viii. p. 134 (1892).—Le Souëf, t. c. p. 162.

Ptilornis victoriæ, Bp. Consp. i. p. 412 (1850).—Rosenb. J. f. O. 1864, p. 123.—Gray, Hand-l. i. p. 105, no. 1272 (1869).

THIS beautiful Rifle-bird is an inhabitant of Rockingham Bay and the adjacent Barnard Islands, in Eastern Australia. It is a smaller bird than *Ptilorhis paradisea*, and differs from the latter in having a distinct reflection of burnished copper on the throat; the gular shield is much smaller and has a coppery gloss; the purple is confined to the chest; and the rest of the under surface is oily green. In *P. paradisea* the upper breast is purple as well as the chest, and the shade of the underparts is olive-green. There is also a difference in the colour of the female birds, the hen of *P. victoriæ* being fawn-coloured with dusky spots, whereas in the female of *P. paradisea* the under surface is buff with a profusion of submarginal black barrings on the feathers.

The late Mr. John Macgillivray gave the following interesting note to Mr. Gould:—"This bird was seen by us during the survey of the N.E. coast of Australia on the Barnard Isles, and on the adjacent shores of the mainland at Rockingham Bay, in the immediate vicinity of Kennedy's first camp. On one of the Barnard Isles (No. III. in lat. 17° 43' S.), which is covered with dense brush, I found Queen Victoria's Rifle-bird in considerable abundance. Females and young males were common, but rather shy; however, by sitting down and quietly watching in some favourite locality, one or more would soon alight on a limb or branch, run along it with great celerity, stop abruptly every now and then to thrust its beak under the loose bark in search of insects, and then fly off as suddenly as it had arrived. Occasionally I have seen one anxiously watching me from behind a branch, its head and neck only being visible. At this time (June) the young males were very pugnacious, and upon one occasion three of them were so intent upon their quarrel that they allowed me to approach sufficiently near to kill them all with a single charge of dust-shot. The adult males were comparatively rare, always solitary and very shy. I never saw them upon the trees, but only in the thick bushes and masses of climbing plants beneath them: on detecting the vicinity of man they immediately shuffled off among the branches towards the opposite side of the thicket and flew off for a short distance. I did not observe them to utter any call or cry; this, however, may have arisen from my attention not having been so much directed to them as to the females and young males, which I was more anxious to procure, the very different style of their colouring having led me to believe that they were a new species of *Pomatostomus*."

Mr. A. J. Campbell writes as follows, in the 'Victorian Naturalist' for 1892:—"In September, 1885, accompanied by two sons of our member, Mr. A. Coles, I visited the Barnard Islands, off the eastern coast of Northern Australia, hoping thereby to procure the eggs of the smallest Rifle-bird (*P. victoriæ*). Again, unfortunately, I was too early, as the dissection of some of the females proved. A season or two subsequently Mr. French, F.L.S., kindly presented me with a nest and egg of this species from Cardwell Scrub, for description. Of their authenticity he entertained not the slightest doubt. The specimens were described in the 'Naturalist' (April and September 1887).

"But coming still nearer home, our good friend and secretary, Mr. Dudley Le Souëf, with Mr. Harry Barnard of Queensland, visited the Barnard Islands last month (November), and, as if drawn by a magnet, they actually pitched their camp under a tree which contained a nest and egg, with a Victoria Rifle-bird sitting thereon. I cannot do better than give Mr. Le Souëf's own words for the discovery of the nest:—"The nest was found 19th November, 1891. Mr. H. Barnard and myself watched the hen bird for some time, and saw her fly into the crown of a pandanus tree growing close to the open beach. Although we could not distinguish the nest itself, we could see the head of the bird as she sat on it. The nest was about ten feet