CUCULUS OPTATUS, *Gould.*

Australian Cuckoo.

Cuculus optatus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part XIII. p. 18.

It is no less remarkable than true, that when we are in countries far distant from that which gave us birth, our minds are strongly disposed to seize upon any objects presenting associations connected with our native land; whatever reminds us of our own country becomes immediately interesting, and its productions acquire a triple value. By the colonists of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, a stripling oak or an elm, a violet or a primrose are regarded as treasures; and a caged blackbird or lark is more prized than a bird of paradise would be here; how welcome then to the settlers will be this Cuckoo, when the part of Australia in which it is found becomes inhabited by Englishmen! Here, as in Europe, it is the harbinger of spring, and an index of the revivifying of nature, and its voice will be heard with even greater sensations of pleasure than was that of its representative in Europe.

I think I hear my readers remark, "Surely this is the true Cuckoo of Europe; and if so, why give it a new name?" To this I may answer, that I can trace distinctions, which in my opinion warrant me in stating the Australian bird to be a distinct species; specific characters, which, although appearing very trivial to the general observer, are so apparent to the ornithologist, that he can always distinguish an Australian specimen from one killed in Europe. In the Australian bird the black bands on the breast are broader and more defined than in the European, and in the former a light fawn tint pervades the abdomen, which part is white in the latter; the claws of the Australian bird are also smaller and more delicate than those of its northern ally; the breast, neck and head of the immature Australian bird are more broadly and distinctly barred with black and white, while the rufous tint which pervades the body of the immature European Cuckoo is almost, if not wholly, wanting.

The northern part of Australia is the only locality in which this bird has been found; the specimens in my collection, as I learn from the labels attached, were killed in the month of January: whether it utters the word 'Cuckoo' or not I am unable to say, but it is most likely that in this respect it also closely assimilates to its European relative.

All the upper surface slaty grey; inner webs of the primaries broadly barred with white; tail-feathers dark violet-brown, with a row of oblong spots of white, placed alternately on either side of the stem, and slightly tipped with white; the lateral feathers have also a row of white spots on the margin of their inner webs; chin and breast light grey; all the under surface buffy white, crossed by bands of black; irides, bill and feet orange.

The Plate represents a male of the natural size.