

EURYSTOMUS AUSTRALIS, Swains.

Australian Roller.

Eurystomus orientalis, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 202.

Eurystomus Australis, Swains. Anim. in Menag., p. 326.—Ib. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 333.

Coracias pacifica, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xxvii?

Pacific Roller, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 371?

Natay-kin, Aborigines of New South Wales.

Dollar Bird of the Colonists.

By the older writers this species was considered to be identical with the *Eurystomus orientalis*, and the merit of first pointing out its distinguishing characters is due to Mr. Swainson, who observes that it is “smaller than *E. orientalis*; has the bill less compressed, and therefore much broader; the colours lighter, but the wings much bluer; the spurious wings entirely vivid blue, as well as the outer webs of the quills; while in *orientalis* these parts are almost black.”

It is a very local species, as I have never seen it from or met with it in any other part of Australia excepting in New South Wales, and even there it is migratory, arriving early in the spring; having brought forth its progeny, it retires northwards on the approach of winter. From what I saw of it,—and I had opportunities of observing it almost daily for some length of time,—it seemed to be most active about sun-rise and sun-set, and during cloudy days; in sultry weather it was generally perched upon some dead branch in a state of quietude. It is a very bold bird at all times, but particularly so during the breeding season, when it comes down with the utmost fury upon any intruder that may venture to approach the hole in the tree in which its eggs are deposited.

When engaged in the capture of insects it usually perches upon the dead upright branch of a tree growing beside and overhanging water, where it sits very erect, soaring all around until a passing insect attracts its notice, when it suddenly darts off, secures its victim, and returns to the same branch; at other times it may constantly be seen on the wing, mostly in pairs, flying just above the tops of the trees, diving and rising again with rapid turns in the most beautiful manner. During flight, which, when performed at a considerable elevation, is heavy and laboured, the white spot in the centre of each wing, then widely expanded, shows very distinctly, and hence the name of Dollar Bird bestowed upon it by the colonists.

It is a very noisy bird, particularly in dull weather, when it often emits its peculiar chattering note during flight.

It is said to take the young Parrots from their holes and kill them, but this I never witnessed; the stomachs of the many I dissected contained nothing but the remains of coleoptera.

The breeding-season lasts from September to December; and the eggs, which are three and sometimes four in number, are deposited in the hole of a tree without any nest; they are of a beautiful pearly white, considerably pointed at the smaller end; their medium length is one inch and five lines, and breadth one inch and two lines.

The sexes are alike in plumage.

Head and neck dark brown, passing into the sea-green of the upper surface, and deepening into black on the lores; spurious wing, outer webs of the basal half of the quills, outer webs of the secondaries and the basal half of the outer webs of the tail-feathers vivid blue; six of the primaries with a greenish white basal band; extremities of the primaries black; tail green at the base, black at the tip; throat vivid blue, with a stripe of lighter blue down the centre of each feather; under surface of the shoulder and abdomen light green; under surface of the inner webs of the primaries, and of all but the two centre tail-feathers deep blue, the former interrupted by the greenish white band; irides dark brown; eyelash, bill and feet red; inside of the mouth yellow.

The figures are of the natural size.