

PODARGUS PHALÆNOIDES, *Gould.*

Moth-plumaged Podargus.

Podargus Phalænoïdes, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VII. p. 142.

Nj-ane? and *In-ner-jin-ert*, Aborigines of the neighbourhood of Port Essington.

THE present bird, which is from Port Essington, may be readily distinguished from every other Australian species of *Podargus* by its small size, by the beautiful, delicate, and moth-like painting of its plumage, and by the colouring of the thighs, which are light brown instead of black; its tail also is rather more lengthened than that of the common species. Like the members of the genus inhabiting Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales, it exhibits considerable variation in size and colouring; in some a rusty red tint pervades the whole plumage, while in others no trace of this hue occurs. I am inclined to consider that age has much to do with this variation in colour: but whether the red-tinted birds are immature or adult I have had no means of ascertaining; further observation is necessary to determine this point; and I consequently hope the subject will not be neglected by those who may have an opportunity of observing the bird alive: the red-tinted birds occur less frequently than the others.

I have several specimens from the north-west coast of Australia, and Mr. Gilbert states that it is abundant in every part of the Coburg Peninsula.

Like the rest of the genus it is strictly nocturnal in its habits; becoming animated at the approach of evening, it sallies forth from the favourite branch where it has rested during the day in search of insects, which, I believe, constitute almost exclusively its food; its whole economy in fact, so far as known, so closely resembles that of the *Podargus humeralis*, that one description would serve for both.

Forehead, sides of the face and all the under surface brownish grey, minutely freckled with black; the feathers of the under surface with a stripe of blackish brown down the centre, these stripes being broadest and most conspicuous on the sides of the chest; all the upper surface brown, minutely freckled with grey, each feather with a broad stripe of black down the centre; shoulders dark brown; coverts freckled with greyish white and with a spot of white, the centre of which is fawn-colour at the tip; primaries dark brown, crossed on their outer webs with an irregular bar of white, the interspaces on the outer primaries rufous; inner webs of the primaries crossed by irregular bands of freckled brown and fawn-colour; tail brown, crossed by numerous broad bands of freckled grey, bounded on either side by irregular blotchings of black; irides orange or reddish hazel; bill horn-colour.

In the other state, to which I have alluded, the whole of the upper surface is of a dark rust-red, freckled on the forehead, wing-coverts and scapularies with white; the bands on the tail less apparent; a rufous tint pervades the grey of the under surface, and the striæ are much narrower than in the specimen above described.

The Plate represents a male and a female, in the differently tinted plumage, of the natural size.