

PODARGUS CUVIERI, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Cuvier's Podargus.

Podargus Cuvieri, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 200.
More-pork of the Colonists.

THIS species is readily distinguished from the *Podargus humeralis* by the bill being much less robust and of a more adpressed form, while the culmen is sharp and elevated; the bird itself is also of a smaller size and altogether more slender than its near ally. Van Diemen's Land, if not its exclusive habitat, is certainly its great stronghold, it being there very numerous, as evidenced by the frequency with which I encountered it during my rambles in the woods; and its distribution over the island is so general, that to particularize localities in which it may be found is quite unnecessary, it being equally abundant near the coast as well as in the interior. I observed it both among the thick branches of the *Casuarinæ* and on the dead limbs of the *Eucalypti*; it appeared however to evince a greater partiality for the latter, which it closely resembles in colour, and from the position in which it rests, looks so like a part of the branch itself as frequently to elude detection; it is generally seen in pairs sitting near each other, and frequently on the same branch. Like the other members of the genus, this bird feeds almost exclusively on insects, of which Coleoptera form a great part: it is strictly nocturnal in its habits, and although not so active as the true *Caprimulgi*, displays considerable alertness in the capture of its food, presenting a striking contrast to its inertness in the day-time, when it is so drowsy that it can scarcely be aroused from its slumbers; that portion of its existence being passed in a sitting posture across a dead branch, perfectly motionless and with the bill pointing upwards: it never flies by day unless roused from the branch on which it is sitting, and this is not easily effected, as neither the discharge of a gun nor any other noise will cause it to take wing. It is frequently captured and kept in captivity, where it excites attention more from the sluggishness of its nature and the singular position it assumes than from any other cause: raw meat forms a suitable substitute for its natural food. In captivity it will pass the entire day in sleep on the back of a chair or any other piece of furniture on which it can perch. Like the owl, it is considered by some a bird of ill omen, principally from the extraordinary sound of its hoarse, unearthly cry, which resembles the words *more-pork*; it not only approaches the immediate vicinity of the houses, but emits this sound while perched in their verandahs and on the buildings themselves; and it is often to be seen perched on the tombstones of the churchyard.

It builds a somewhat neatly-formed flat nest, about seven inches in diameter, in the fork of an horizontal branch; the exterior formed of small sticks, and the interior of the fibrous portions of various plants; the eggs are white, and nearly of a true oval in form, being one inch and nine lines long by one inch and three lines broad.

Considerable variation occurs in the colouring of individuals, the prevailing tint being a dull ashy grey, while others are of a rich chestnut hue; but whether this be indicative of immaturity, or characteristic of the fully adult plumage, I have not been able to satisfy myself. The figures represent both these styles of colouring.

Lores brown, each feather tipped with mealy white, forming a line before and above the eye; feathers of the forehead mealy white, blending into the dull ashy grey of the head and back, all the feathers of which have a stripe of blackish brown down the centre, terminating in a small spot of white, and are moreover minutely freckled with greyish white and dark brown; wing-coverts chestnut, each tipped with an oval spot of white bounded posteriorly with black, forming a line across the wing; remainder of the wing brown, mottled with greyish white, arranged, particularly on the primaries, in the form of irregular bars; scapularies washed with buff and with a broad stripe of blackish brown down the centre; under surface brownish grey, minutely freckled with white, and with a narrow line of blackish brown down the centre; sides of the neck washed with chestnut; tail grey, minutely freckled with greyish white and black, assuming the form of broad irregular bands, each feather with a small spot of white at the tip; irides varying from yellow to reddish yellow and hazel; feet olive-brown.

Other examples have the general tint rich chestnut-brown, with all the markings larger and more decided.

The figures are of the natural size.