

STRIX PERSONATA, Vig.

Masked Barn Owl.

Strix personata, Vig. in Proc. of Com. of Sci., and Corr. of Zool. Soc., Part I. p. 60.—Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.

Strix Cyclops, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. p. 140 ; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III. ?

It will be recollected that the habitat of the *Strix castanops* is Van Diemen's Land, to which island it is probably restricted ; on the other hand, the bird here figured, although nearly allied to the preceding, not only differs in so many essential characters as to leave little doubt in my mind of its being specifically distinct, but is confined to the continent of Australia, over which it enjoys a wide range. With the exception of the north coast, I have received specimens from every part of the country. During my visit to the interior of South Australia, numerous individuals fell to my gun, which upon comparison presented no material variation in their colour or markings from others killed in New South Wales and Swan River.

If I were puzzled with respect to the changes to which the *Strix castanops* is apparently subject, I am not less so with those of the present bird ; for although I find the tawny and buff colouring of the face and under surface is generally lighter, I also find a diversity in the colouring of the different parts of the under surface ; I have specimens in my cabinet with the face, all the under surface and the ground-colour of the upper pure white, and prior to my visit to Australia I characterized specimens thus coloured as a distinct species under the name of *Strix Cyclops*, but I have now some reason to believe them to be fully adult males of the bird here figured. I may remark, that out of the numerous examples I killed in South Australia in the month of June, I did not meet with one in the white plumage.

The *Strix personata* is almost a third smaller than the *S. castanops*, and as the sexes of both species bear a relative proportion in size, the male of the one is about equal to the female of the other. The white spottings of the upper surface of the former are larger than those of the latter, and the surrounding patches of dark brown and buff are not so deep, giving the whole of that part of the bird a more marbled or speckled appearance.

Pale buff ; the upper part of the head, the back and the wings variegated with dark brown, and sparingly dotted with white ; under surface paler with a few brown spots ; tail buff, undulated with brown fascia ; facial disc purplish buff, margined with deep brown spots ; bill pale horn-colour ; toes yellow.

The figures represent the two sexes of the natural size.