

CIRCUS JARDINII, Gould.

Jardine's Harrier.

Circus Jardinii, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 141; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.

THIS very beautiful Harrier, which is distinguished from every other species of the genus at present known by the spotted character of its plumage, is plentifully dispersed over every portion of New South Wales, wherever localities favourable to the existence of the Harrier tribe occurs, such as extensive plains, wastes, and luxuriant grassy flats between the hills in mountainous districts. The extent of its range over the Australian continent has not yet been ascertained, and I have never observed it from any other portion of the country than that mentioned above, nor do specimens occur in collections formed in other parts.

In the third part of my "Synopsis of the Birds of Australia," I expressed an opinion that the *Circus assimilis* of Messrs. Jardine and Selby's "Illustrations of Ornithology" was merely the young of the present species: this opinion, however, my visit to Australia proved to be erroneous; the *Circus assimilis*, as will be seen on reference to the preceding plate, proving to be entirely distinct. The present noble bird has been named in honour of Sir William Jardine, Bart., one of the authors of the work above mentioned; and which, as well as his other valuable publications connected with the science of ornithology, are well known to every zoologist.

To describe the economy of the Jardine's Harrier would be merely to repeat what has been said respecting that of the former species. Like the other members of the genus, it flies lazily over the surface of the plains, intently seeking for lizards, snakes, small quadrupeds and birds; and when not pressed by hunger, reposes on some dried stick, elevated knoll, or stone, from which it can survey all around. Although I observed this species in all parts of the Hunter in summer, when others of the *Falconidae* were breeding, I did not succeed in procuring its eggs, or obtain any satisfactory information respecting its nidification; in all probability its nest is constructed on or near the ground, on the scrubby crowns of the low, open, sterile hills that border the plains.

The sexes present considerable difference in size, but are very similar in their markings; both are spotted, but the female is by far the finest bird in every respect.

Crown of the head, cheeks and ear-coverts dark chestnut, each feather having a mark of brown down the centre; facial disc, back of the neck, upper part of the back, and chest uniform dark grey; lower part of the back and scapulars dark grey, most of the feathers being blotched and marked at the tips with two faint spots of white, one on each side of the stem; shoulders, under surface of the wing, abdomen, thighs and under tail-coverts rich chestnut, the whole of the feathers beautifully spotted with white, the spots regularly disposed down each web, and being largest and most distinct on the abdomen; greater and lesser wing-coverts brownish grey, irregularly barred and tipped with a lighter colour; secondaries dark grey, crossed with three narrow lines of dark brown, and tipped with a broad band of the same colour, the extreme tips being paler; primaries black for two-thirds of their length, their bases brownish buff; upper tail-coverts brown, barred and tipped with greyish white; tail alternately barred with conspicuous bands of dark brown and grey, the brown band nearest the extremity being the broadest, the extreme tips greyish white; irides bright orange-yellow; cere olive-yellow; bill blue at the base, black at the culmen and tips; legs yellow.

The young has the whole of the upper surface nearly uniform dark brown, the tail more numerous barred, and the feathers of the chest and upper part of the abdomen striated, instead of spotted with white: in other respects it resembles the adults.

The front figure represents the female and the other the male, about two-thirds of the natural size.