

MILVUS AFFINIS, *Gould.*

Allied Kite.

Milvus affinis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 140; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.
E-le-nid-jul, Aborigines of Port Essington.

WITH the single exception of Van Diemen's Land, this Kite is universally dispersed over all the Australian Colonies, and is equally as common at Port Essington, on the north coast, as it is on the southern portions of the country.

Its confident and intrepid disposition renders it familiar to every one, and not unfrequently costs it its life, as it fearlessly enters the farm-yard of the settler, and if unopposed, impudently deals out destruction to the young poultry, pigeons, &c. tenanting it. It is also a constant attendant at the camps of the Aborigines and the hunting parties of the settlers, perching on the small trees immediately surrounding them, and patiently waiting for the refuse or offal. The temerity of one individual was such, that it even disputed my right to a Bronze-winged Pigeon that had fallen before my gun, for which act, I am now almost ashamed to say, it paid the penalty of its life; on reflection I asked myself why should advantage have been taken of the confident disposition implanted in the bird by its Maker, particularly too when it was in a part of the country where no white man had taken up his abode and assumed a sovereign right over all that surrounds him.

The flight of this bird, which is closely allied in character to that of the *Milvus ater* of Europe, is much less protracted and soaring than that of the typical Kites; the bird is also much more arboreal in its habits, skulking about the forest after the manner of the true Buzzards. Great numbers have been observed hovering over the smoke of the extensive fires so common in Australia, closely watching for Lizards and any of the smaller mammalia that may have fallen victims to the flames, or have been driven by the heat from their lurking places.

In the southern parts of Australia this bird is a stationary species; I did not, however, succeed in procuring its eggs, or any account of its nidification.

The sexes are so nearly alike that the single figure in the accompanying Plate will serve for a representation of both.

Feathers of the head, and the back and sides of the neck reddish fawn colour, with a central stripe of dark blackish brown; all the upper surface glossy brown inclining to chocolate, and passing into reddish brown on the wing-coverts, the shaft of each feather being black, and the extreme tip pale brown; primaries black; secondaries blackish brown; tail, which is slightly forked, brown, crossed by several indistinct bars of a darker tint, and each feather tipped with greyish white; throat brownish fawn colour, with the stem of each feather black; the remainder of the under surface rufous brown, with a central line of dark brown on each feather, which is broadest and most conspicuous on the chest; cere, gape and base of the lower mandible yellow; upper mandible and point of the lower black; tarsi and toes yellow; claws black; irides very dark brown.

The figure is about two-thirds of the natural size.