

IERACIDEA OCCIDENTALIS, *Gould.*

Western Brown Hawk.

Ieracidea occidentalis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., June 25, 1844.

Kâr-gyne, Aborigines of the lowland and mountain districts of Western Australia.

HITHERTO ornithologists, and among them myself, have regarded the Common Brown Hawks, which occur so numerous in collections from Australia, as referrible to one and the same species,—an opinion founded principally upon the circumstance of the members of this genus being subject to a greater number of changes of plumage from youth to maturity than any other; observation, however, aided by dissection, and that too of very many examples, and at all seasons of the year, has convinced me that there are two species, which appear to occupy opposite portions of the continent; the present bird, as its name implies, being confined to the western, and the *I. Berigora* to the eastern. Both species are occasionally found in South Australia, but the latter is the most abundant, and here it would seem that they inosculate.

The present bird is very generally spread over the Swan River Settlement, and in its habits and economy closely assimilates to its representative in New South Wales. It feeds upon birds, lizards, insects, caterpillars, and carrion. Its smaller size renders it a somewhat less formidable enemy to the farm-yard, still it requires considerable vigilance to check its depredations upon the broods of poultry, ducks, &c.

As its smaller legs, more compact body and lengthened pointed wings would indicate, it flies with ease, making long sweeps and beautiful curves, which are often performed near the ground. It loves to dwell among swampy places, which at all times afford it an abundant supply of lizards, frogs, newts, &c.

It breeds in September and October.

The nest is formed of dried sticks and is usually constructed in thickly foliaged trees, sometimes near the ground, but more frequently on the topmost branches of the highest gums; the eggs, which are generally two, but sometimes three in number, differ very much in their markings, the rich brown pervading the surface in some more than in others; those in my collection measure two inches long by one and a half broad.

Crown of the head, back and scapularies rusty brown, with a narrow stripe of black down the centre; rump deep rusty brown, crossed by broad bands of dark brown, the tip of each feather buffy white; wings very dark brown; the inner webs of the primaries with a series of large spots, assuming the form of bars of a deep rusty brown near the shaft, and fading into buffy white on the margin; wing-coverts tipped with rusty red; spurious wing with a row of rusty spots on either side of the shaft; tail dark brown, crossed by numerous broad irregular bars of rusty red, and tipped with pale buff; ear-coverts and a stripe running down from the angle of the lower mandible dark brown; chin, all the under surface, and a broad band which nearly encircles the neck pale buffy white, with a fine line of dark brown down the centre; thighs deep rust-red, each feather with a line of black down the centre and tipped with buffy white; irides reddish brown; eyelid straw-yellow; orbits bluish flesh-colour; bill bluish lead-colour, becoming black at the tip; cere pale yellow; legs and feet light ashy grey, excepting the scales in front of the tarsi, which are dull yellowish white.

The Plate represents an adult male and female rather less than the size of life.