

ICHTHYIAËTUS LEUCOGASTER.

White-bellied Sea-eagle.

Falco leucogaster, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 13.—Gmel. Linn., vol. i. p. 157.—Temm. Pl. Col. 49.

White-bellied Eagle, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. i. p. 33.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. i. p. 242.

Haliæetus leucogaster, Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.

——— *sphenurus*, Gould, in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. 1837, p. 138.—Ib. Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.
young.

I HAVE little doubt that this noble species of Sea-eagle will be found to extend its range over all those portions of the Australian continent that present situations suitable to its peculiar habits. It has been observed along the whole southern coast, from Moreton Bay on the east to Swan River on the west, including Tasmania and all the small islands in Bass's Straits. It has neither the boldness nor the courage of the Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Aquila fucosa*, whose quarry is frequently the Kangaroo and the Bustard; and although, at first sight, its appearance would warrant the supposition that it pursues the same means for obtaining living prey as the true *Pandion*, by the act of submersion, yet I can affirm that this is not the case, and that it never plunges beneath the surface of the water, but depends almost entirely for its subsistence upon the dead Cetacea, fish, etc., that may be thrown up by the sea and left on the shore by the receding waves; to which, in all probability, are added living mollusks and other lower marine animals: its peculiar province is consequently the sea-shore, and it especially delights to take up its abode on the borders of small bays and inlets of the sea, and rivers as high as they are influenced by the tide; nevertheless, it is to be met with, though more rarely, on the borders of lakes and inland streams, but never in the forests or sterile plains of the interior. As it is almost invariably seen in pairs, it would appear to be permanently mated; each pair inhabiting a particular bay or inlet, to the exclusion of others of the same species. Unless disturbed or harassed, the White-bellied Sea-eagle does not shun the abode of man, but becomes fearless and familiar. Among the numerous places in which I observed it was the Cove of Sydney, where one or two were daily seen performing their aerial gyrations above the shipping and over the tops of the houses: if I mistake not, they were the same pair of birds that found a safe retreat in Elizabeth Bay, skirting the property of Alexander Macleay, Esq., and where they might be frequently seen perched on the bare limb of a tree by the water's edge, forming an interesting and ornamental addition to the scene. In Tasmania it is especially abundant in D'Entrecasteaux Channel, and along the banks of the Derwent and the Tamar; and there was scarcely one of the little islets in Bass's Straits but was inhabited by a pair of these birds, which, in these cases, subsisted in a great measure on the Petrels and Penguins, which resort there in great numbers to breed, and which are very easily captured.

With regard to the nidification of the White-bellied Sea-eagle, I could not fail to remark how readily the birds accommodate themselves to the different circumstances in which they are placed; for while on the main land they invariably construct their large flat nest on a fork of the most lofty trees, on the islands, where not a tree is to be found, it is placed on the flat surface of a large stone, the materials of which it is formed being twigs and branches of the Barilla, a low shrub which is there plentiful. While traversing the woods in Recherche Bay, I observed a nest of this species near the top of a noble stringy bark tree (*Eucalyptus*), the bole of which measured forty-one feet round, and was certainly upwards of 200 feet high; this had probably been the site of a nest for many years, being secure even from the attacks of the natives, expert as they are at climbing. On a small island, of about forty acres in extent, opposite the settlement of Flinders, I shot a fully-fledged young bird, which was perched upon the cone of a rock; and I then, for the first time, discovered my error in characterizing, in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London," and in my "Synopsis," the bird in this state as a different species, under the name of *Haliæetus sphenurus*, an error which I take this opportunity to correct. The eggs are almost invariably two