

from the opposite side, but from the denseness of the thicket and the darkness closing around us, I had no chance of getting a shot at it. Mr. Roe, the Surveyor-general, who examined several mounds during his expedition to the interior in the year 1836, found the eggs nearly ready to hatch in the month of November, and invariably seven or eight in number; while another authority has informed me of an instance of fourteen being taken from one mound."

In a subsequent letter Mr. Gilbert states that the flavour of the egg is very similar to that of the Tortoise or Turtle, and that when mixed with tea its similarity to the peculiar roughness and earthy flavour of that of the Hawk's-bill Turtle is very remarkable.

Genus MEGAPODIUS, *Quoy & Gaim.*

The members of this genus inhabit all the Indian and Philippine Islands and Australia. Mr. G. R. Gray informs me that "the females of some species associate together in bands during the night and deposit their eggs in a cavity which they dig to the depth of two or three feet; that the successive deposits of eggs amount to a hundred or more and are left to be hatched by the solar rays; that some cover them with sand and others with the remains of plants; and that the eggs are extremely large for the size of the birds, and are generally of a cinnamon colour."

442. *Megapodius tumulus*, *Gould* Vol. V. Pl. 79.

The following interesting account of the breeding-places of this remarkable bird has been transmitted to me by Mr. John M'Gillivray as the result of his observations on Nogo or Megapodius Island in Endeavour Straits. It will be seen that its range is more extensive than I had assigned to it:—

"The most southern locality known to me for this singular bird is Haggerston Island (in lat. 12° 3' south), where I observed several of its mounds of very large size, but did not see any of the birds. During the survey of Endeavour Straits in H.M.S. Bramble, I was more fortunate, having succeeded in procuring both male and female on the island marked 'Nogo' upon the chart, where I resided for several days for that sole purpose. On this small island, not more than half a mile in length, rising at one extremity into a low rounded hill densely covered with jungle (or what in New South Wales would be called 'brush'), three mounds, one of them apparently deserted before completion, were found. The two others were examined by Mr. Jukes and myself. The most recent, judging from the smoothness of its sides and the want of vegetable matter, was situated upon the crest of the hill, and measured 8 feet in height (or 13½ from the base of the slope to the summit) and 77 feet in circumference. In this mound, after several hours' hard digging into a well-packed mass of earth, stones, decaying branches and leaves and other vegetable matter, and the living roots of trees, we found numerous fragments of eggs, besides one broken egg containing a dead and putrid chick, and another whole one, which proved to be addled. All were imbedded at a depth of *six feet* from the nearest part of the surface, at which place the heat produced by the fermentation of the mass was considerable. The egg, 3¼ by 2½ inches, was dirty brown, covered with a kind of epidermis, which easily chipped off, exposing a pure white surface beneath. Another mound, situated at the foot of the hill close to the beach, measured no less than 150 feet in circumference, and to form this immense accumulation of materials the ground in the vicinity had been scraped quite bare by the birds, and numerous shallow excavations pointed out whence the materials had been derived. Its form was an irregular oval, the flattened summit not being central as in the first instance, but situated nearer the larger end, which was elevated 14 feet from the ground, the slope measuring in various directions 18, 21½, and 24 feet. At Port Lihou, in a small bay a few miles to the westward, at Cape York and at Port Essington, I found other mounds which were comparatively low, and appeared to have been dug into by the natives. The great size the tumuli (which are probably the work of several generations) have attained on Haggerston and Nogo Islands arises doubtless from those places being seldom visited by the Aborigines. I found several eggs of large size in the ovarium of a female shot in August, while the condition of the oviduct showed that an egg had very recently passed; hence it is probable that, in spite of their great comparative size, one bird lays several; but whether each mound is resorted to by more than one pair, I had not the means of ascertaining.