

Among the perching birds there is a great excess of the INSECTIVORÆ—*Podargi*, *Meliphagidæ*, *Maluridæ*, *Gymnorhinæ*, &c., of the GRANIVORÆ, such as various species of the *Fringillidæ*, and of the *Psittacidæ*. The latter tribe of birds is more numerous in Australia than in any other part of the world, and forms four great groups, viz. the *Calyptorhynchi*, which mainly procure their food from the *Banksiæ*, *Casuarinæ*, and *Eucalypti*; the *Cacatua*, which feed upon the terrestrial *Orchideæ*, &c.; the *Trichoglossi*, which subsist upon the nectar they extract from the flower-cups and blossoms of the *Eucalypti*; and the ground and grass Parrakeets, which feed almost exclusively on the seeds of the various grasses that abound on the plains; the united groups amounting to nearly sixty species.

Of the Rasorial forms,—while the Pigeons and Hemipodes are numerous, the larger and typical GALLINACEÆ are entirely wanting; their only representatives being a few species of *Coturnix* and *Synoicus*. The Grallatorial birds are about equal in number to those of other countries; and among the water birds the true Ducks are but few, while the *Procellaridæ* which visit the coast are more abundant than in any other part of the world. On a retrospect of the whole we find a greater number of nocturnal birds than is comprised in the ornithology of any other section of the globe. I must not omit to mention too the extraordinary fecundity which prevails in Australia, many of its smaller birds breeding three or four times in a season; but laying fewer eggs in the early spring when insect life is less developed, and a greater number later in the season when the supply of insect food has become more abundant. I have also some reason to believe that the young of many species breed during the first season, for among others I frequently found one section of the Honey-eaters (the *Melithrepti*) sitting upon eggs while still clothed in the brown dress of immaturity; and we know that such is the case with the introduced GALLINACEÆ, three or four generations of which have been often produced in the course of a year.

Another peculiar feature connected with the Australian ornithology is that of its comprising several forms endowed with the power of sustaining and enjoying life without a supply of water, that element without which most others languish and die; for instance, the Halcyons, which I found living and even breeding on the parched plains of the interior during the severe drought of 1838–39, far removed from any water; the food of these birds being insects and lizards.

A considerable number of the older-known of the Australian birds have been described in the general works of Vieillot, Latham, Shaw and others; but their descriptions are so vague, and the species themselves so frequently referred to genera widely different from those to which they really belong, that it has been impossible to identify the whole of them; but wherever they could be identified with certainty their names have been adopted, or quoted in the synonyms.

The “Birds of Europe” were arranged according to the views of the late Mr. Vigors; and in the “Birds of Australia” the arrangement is mainly the same, with some modifications of my own which appeared to me to be necessary.

I have been constrained, for the sake of uniformity in size, to divide the present work into seven volumes; the first of which comprises the RAPTORES, the small number of which will account for its being somewhat thinner than the others; the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth volumes comprise the INSESSORES, RASORES and GRALLATORES in one continuous series, and the seventh the NATATORES.