

species of birds appear to entirely forsake the part of the country in which they have been accustomed to dwell, and to betake themselves to some distant locality, where they remain for five or ten years, or even for a longer period, and whence they as suddenly disappear as they had arrived. Some remarkable instances of this kind came under my own observation. The beautiful little warbling Grass Parrakeet (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), which, prior to 1838, was so rare in the southern parts of Australia that only a single example had been sent to Europe, arrived in that year in such countless multitudes on the Liverpool plains, that I could have procured any number of specimens, and more than once their delicate bodies formed an excellent article of food for myself and party. The *Nymphicus Novæ-Hollandiæ* forms another case in point, and the Harlequin Bronze-winged Pigeon (*Peristera histrionica*) a third; this latter bird occurred in such numbers on the plains near the Namoi in 1839, that eight fell to a single discharge of my gun; both the settlers and natives assured me that they had suddenly arrived, and that they had never before been seen in that part of the country. The aborigines who were with me, and of whom I must speak in the highest praise, for the readiness with which they rendered me their assistance, affirmed, upon learning the nature of my pursuits, that they had come to meet me. The *Tribonyx ventralis* may be cited as another species whose movements are influenced by the same law. This bird visited the colony of Swan River in 1833, and that of South Australia in 1840, in such countless myriads, that whole fields of corn were trodden down and destroyed in a single night; and even the streets and gardens of Adelaide were, according to Captain Sturt, alive with them.

If we compare the ornithology of Australia with that of any other country in similar latitudes and of the same extent, we shall find that it fully equals, if it does not exceed them all, in the number of species it comprises; and those parts of the country that are still unexplored doubtless contain many yet to be added to the list of its Fauna.

In the course of the present work it will be found that I have given a wide range of habitat to some of the species, and that I have at the same time pointed out slight variations, not amounting to a specific difference, in individuals from different localities. This difference I am unable to account for. I do not believe the birds to be distinct species, but am inclined to regard them as varieties or races of the same species, modified by the character of the situations they frequent. I may mention some curious instances in point: the *Artamus sordidus* is a migratory bird in Van Diemen's Land, and is partially stationary in New South Wales, yet all the examples procured in the former country are the largest and most vigorous, which we should naturally attribute to the excess of food afforded by its more humid climate; but precisely the reverse of this occurs with regard to the *Graucalus parvirostris*, which is also a migratory bird in Van Diemen's Land, and examples of which, killed in that island, are much more feeble and diminutive than the *Graucali* obtained in New South Wales. The *Halcyon sanctus*, again, whose distribution is universal in Australia, varies somewhat in size in every colony, still not sufficiently so as to afford any tangible specific characters.

Upon taking a general view of the Australian ornithology, we find no species of Vulture, only one typical Eagle, and indeed a remarkable deficiency in the number of the species of its birds of prey, with the exception of the nocturnal Owls, among which the members of the restricted genus *Strix* are more numerous than in any other part of the world; a circumstance which is probably attributable to the great abundance of small nocturnal quadrupeds.