

## MEGAPODIUS BRENCHLEYI, Gray.

### Brenchley's Megapode.

*Megapodius brenchleyi*, Gray, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. (4) v. p. 328 (1870).—Id. Hand-list of Birds, ii. p. 255, no. 9553 (1870).—Id. Cruise of the 'Curaçoa,' p. 392, pl. 20 (1873).—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. Wales, iv. p. 75 (1879).—Schlegel, Mus. Pays-Bas, Megapodii, p. 65 (1880).—Oustalet, Ann. Sc. Nat. (6) xi. art. 2, p. 105 (1881).—Tristr. Ibis, 1882, p. 144.—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. xviii. p. 7 (1882).—Id. Orn. Papuasie e delle Molucche, iii. p. 241 (1882).  
*Megapodius* sp., Brazier, P. Z. S. 1874, p. 606 (pt.).—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. Wales, ii. p. 112 (1878).

BRENCHLEY'S Megapode was discovered by the gentleman whose name it bears, in Gulf Island, one of the Solomon group, a young bird having been brought by the natives on board the 'Curaçoa' and acquired by Mr. Brenchley. The late Mr. Gray described the species as new from the young bird only, a practice only a trifle less reprehensible than naming a species from an egg.

This Megapode probably occurs on all the islands of the Solomon group, as Mr. Cockerell procured it on Savo and Kera, and its existence was affirmed on San Christoval. Its occurrence in that island has now been placed beyond doubt by our friend Lieut. Reginald Tupper, R.N., who has presented a specimen to the British Museum.

The adult bird was first described by Mr. E. P. Ramsay from specimens brought by Mr. Cockerell from Savo. Previously the young bird had been figured in Mr. Brenchley's 'Cruise of the Curaçoa,' but until the British Museum received the specimen above mentioned from Mr. Tupper, there was no example of the adult bird in this country. On comparing Mr. Tupper's specimen with the series of *Megapodius* in the British Museum, it is evident that *M. brenchleyi* and *M. eremita* are very closely allied, and, indeed, scarcely separable, notwithstanding that, according to the arrangement of Count Salvadori, they ought to go into distinct sections of the genus, as *M. eremita* is supposed to have black legs. Beyond this, we can only see that *M. brenchleyi* is a little larger and a trifle browner.

The specimen of *M. brenchleyi* had much lighter legs when first brought to England by Mr. Tupper, and we believe that skins gradually darken as regards the legs; great care must therefore be taken in deducing specific characters from them in the genus *Megapodius*. The Plate was drawn directly the bird was placed in our hands, and the legs were coloured according to the skin; but in a few months the light colour of the upper part of the tarsus has considerably darkened. Further observations in the field, therefore, will be necessary before the value of the colour of the tarsus can be relied on as a specific character.

The following is a description of the bird given by Mr. Tupper:—

*Adult.* General colour above olive, the upper mantle washed with slaty grey like hind neck; lower back dull blackish slate-colour, browner on the upper tail-coverts; wing-coverts dusky slate-colour, the inner ones ruddy olive-brown like the secondaries; bastard-wing, primary-coverts, and quills dusky, the latter externally ruddy brown or chocolate; upper tail-coverts and tail-feathers chocolate-brown; crown of head scantily clothed with feathers, dusky slate-colour washed with brown; hind neck and sides of neck slaty grey; lores and forehead, ear-coverts, cheeks and throat red, scantily feathered; remainder of under surface of body from the fore neck downwards dark slate-colour, washed with brown, the under tail-coverts darker brown; under wing-coverts and axillaries like the breast; quills below ashy, bronzy brown on the outer webs. Total length 15·5 inches, culmen 1·0, wing 8·8, tail 3·1, tarsus 2·55.

The figure in the Plate is of the natural size, and is taken from the specimen procured by Lieut. Tupper in San Christoval.

[R. B. S.]