

CLYTOCEYX REX, *Sharpe.*

Spoon-billed Kingfisher.

Clytoceyx rex, Sharpe, Ann. Nat. Hist. (5th ser.) vi. p. 231 (1880).

THE remarkable bird which is figured in the accompanying plate is a native of South-eastern New Guinea, where it was obtained by Mr. Charles Hunstein, who has been collecting in the interior about Milne Bay, East Cape, and the neighbouring localities. Having already in the course of the present work had occasion to express some disappointment that the southern portion of the great Papuan island had not produced the number of new species which one might reasonably have expected, I feel bound to qualify this opinion when I see before me such an extraordinary form of bird as the present. It is evident that the avifauna of the lowlands has too much resemblance to that of the adjoining continent of Australia and to that of the Aru Islands for us to expect, until the mountains are reached, any thing strikingly different from the birds of these two localities.

In the MS. list of birds sent by Mr. Hunstein he speaks of this species as the "Spoon-billed" Kingfisher; and I have adopted this English name, not so much on account of its absolute correctness from an ornithological point of view, but because it represents the first impression of the original collector. To ornithologists the epithet of "spoon-bill" recalls the flattened and spatulated bill of the orthodox Spoonbill (*Platalea*), or that of the spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurhynchus*); but the beak of this large Kingfisher more resembles the bowls of two spoons placed in opposition to each other.

We have as yet no details as to the habits of the present species; but they doubtless resemble those of the large "Jackasses" of Australia. The bills of the specimens sent were covered with dried earth, as if the birds had been grubbing for food on the ground. Although the species is, no doubt, generically distinct from the Laughing Jackasses of Australia, there can be no doubt that in the genus *Dacelo* it will find its nearest allies. Different as the bill is, there is one character which betrays this affinity; and that is seen in the difference of the sexes, the male having a blue tail, and the female a rufous one; this, as is well known, is one of the leading features in a true *Dacelo*.

I translate the original description given by Mr. Bowdler Sharpe.

Male. Head brown; feathers surrounding the eye and sides of the face brown; ear-coverts black, extending backwards onto the sides of the neck and forming a broad band; a stripe above the eye, the lower checks and a broad band on the neck ochraceous buff; interscapular region black; scapulars and wing-coverts brown, the latter margined with ochraceous, the outermost of the least series washed with greenish blue; primary-coverts and quills dark brown, externally washed with dull green; lower back and rump silvery cobalt; upper tail-coverts and tail dark brown washed with green; throat white; rest of the body underneath, with the under wing-coverts, ochraceous buff; quills dusky below, with the inner web margined with pale ochraceous. Total length 12 inches, culmen 1.95, wing 6.35, tail 4.7, tarsus 0.9.

Female (immature). Differs from the male in its reddish tail. The hind neck and the undersurface having dusky margins to the feathers, show that the bird is not quite adult.

The figures in the Plate are drawn from the pair in the British Museum.