

COLLOCALIA TERRÆ REGINÆ.

Queensland Edible Swift.

Cypselus terra regina, Ramsay, P. Z. S. 1874, p. 601.

AUSTRALIA has long been known to possess true Swifts, Swallows, and Martins; but hitherto the genus *Collocalia*, of which numerous species inhabit the surrounding islands, has been conspicuous by its absence. Specimens of an Edible Swift were, indeed, procured on Dunk Island by the late Mr. John Macgillivray during the voyage of the 'Rattlesnake;' but it was not till two years ago that they became known as inhabitants of the continent of Australia. As might have been expected, the Dunk-Island birds are identical with the Australian; and, after careful comparison, I have decided on keeping this new Swiftlet distinct from *Collocalia spodiopygia* of Peale, to which it bears undoubted affinity. The addition of Australia as a habitat for the genus *Collocalia* is of great interest, as its range is decidedly peculiar, extending as it does over the different islands of Oceania, Malasia, India, and it even occurs in Mauritius.

For the acquisition of a specimen of this new Australian bird I am indebted to Mr. Waller, of Brisbane. In a short note this gentleman states:—"This Swallow was collected by Mr. Broadbent on the coast-range of Rockingham Bay. First seen at Dalrymple's Gap, in the morning they appeared to come from the north and returned again in the evening. Before rain, this bird assembles in large flocks, and skims over the ground with great rapidity. They were all leaving about the latter part of June."

The following is Mr. Ramsay's description, copied from the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society,' where the name of *terra regina* was first bestowed:—

"Whole of the upper surface, except the rump, very dark sooty brown tinged with metallic lustre, being of a darker brown on the outer webs and paler on the inner webs of the wing-feathers; across the rump a greyish-white band having a narrow line of dark brown down the shaft of each feather; whole of the under surface dull greyish brown, of a silky texture and somewhat glossy; under surface of wings and tail and the under tail-coverts of a darker tint, the basal half of all the feathers on the body nearly black; bill black; feet blackish brown; iris dark brown.

"Total length from 4 to 4.2 inches; bill from the nostril 0.1, from forehead 0.2, from angle of the mouth 0.45; wing from flexure 4.4; tail 2.1 to 2.4; tarsi 0.35.

"The sexes are alike in plumage and size. The texture of the plumage is remarkably soft, and to the touch resembles the fur of a Bat.

"This species frequents the north-east coast-ranges near Cardwell, Rockingham Bay, where it is tolerably plentiful, but very difficult to procure, from its small size and swift flight. Small flocks may be seen flying to and fro over the clearer parts of the lower spurs of the coast-ranges; and frequently the same troop returns to the same open ground day after day; towards evening others may be found sweeping over the tops of the scrubs and about precipitous sides of the rocky ridges, where they doubtless breed. I found several young or immature-plumaged birds; and none amongst those I obtained had the tail fully grown. I have never seen this species in any other part of Australia than near Rockingham Bay. It was observed in the neighbourhood of Cardwell during October 1873, and when I left in April 1874 was still numerous there. For the first knowledge of this and several other new and rare species I am indebted to Inspector Robert Johnstone, of the police force on the Herbert river near Cardwell, as well as for much valuable information on the natural history of that interesting region."

The figures in the accompanying Plate are rather under the size of life.