

## MANUCODIA COMRII, *Sclater*.

### Curl-crested Manucode.

*Manucodia comrii*, Sclater, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1876, p. 459, pl. xlii., et P. Z. S. 1877, p. 43.

THE discovery of this interesting bird in the southern parts of New Guinea confirms the opinion so generally offered by naturalists, that this highly gifted country may yet have many stores left for our contemplation and study; indeed, as time runs on, it is constantly yielding fruits to those who may enter its precincts, let it be on the north or the south. Since the time of Wallace's visit the Dutch explorer Von Rosenberg, Dr. Meyer, Hr. Bruijn, and the Italians D'Albertis and Beccari have each immortalized their names by their discoveries in Papuan ornithology. But that of the fine bird under consideration is due to a medical officer of Her Majesty's Service; and the species itself may be regarded as one of the most valuable of the novelties lately transmitted to us, particularly so from its adding another member to the Paradiseidae. We find in the 'Proceedings' of the Zoological Society, as above quoted, the following note by Dr. Sclater:— "Dr. Comrie has placed in my hands, for determination, some bird-skins collected by him while serving as medical officer in H.M.S. 'Basilisk' during its recent survey of the south-east coast of New Guinea under the command of Captain Moresby. The collection contains thirteen specimens, belonging to eleven species, of which one is quite new to science, and two others are only known from single specimens."

"This *Manucodia*," Dr. Sclater continues, "may be regarded as by far the finest and largest species of the genus yet discovered. It is immediately distinguishable from *M. chalybeia* and *M. atra* by its much larger size and longer bill, which is deeply sulcated at the nostrils. The characteristic curling of the feathers is extended to a greater degree, and pervades the whole of the head and neck; the feathers of the abdomen are black at the base, broadly margined with purple. Dr. Comrie obtained a single specimen of this fine bird in May 1874 in Huan Gulf. It was shot flying amongst the trees in the scrubby forest, about a quarter of a mile from the coast."

In a subsequent communication to the Society Mr. Sclater called attention to the original and unique specimen of his *Manucodia comrii* (P. Z. S. 1876, p. 459), now belonging to the collection of the Marquis of Tweeddale, the President of the Society, which since it was described and figured, had undergone a most efficient "remake" in Mr. Bartlett's able hands.

The curly feathers of the head were now much more apparent and better developed than shown even in the woodcut given with the original description, and formed standing ridges over each eye. The tail was not flat, as would appear from the figure (pl. xlii.), but "boat-shaped" as in some of the American Grakles (*Quiscalus*), *i. e.* with the median tail-feathers elevated above the lateral. The two middle tail-feathers were very peculiar in construction, being shorter by three quarters of an inch than the next pair, and having the inner webs twisted round over the outer, so as to show their under surfaces.

The highly singular characteristic of the turnover feathers is also seen in the Green Manucode (*M. chalybea*), where the frizzly plumes, particularly those of the face and neck, are even more singular. Such eccentricities are really not to be accounted for, as we cannot conceive they can be for any useful purpose.

I must not conclude this paper without returning my thanks to the Marquis of Tweeddale and Dr. Sclater for the loan of the specimen from which the accompanying drawing was taken. The principal figure is of the size of life.