

PARADISEA DECORA, *Salv. & Godm.*

Grey-chested Bird of Paradise.

Paradisea decora, Salvin and Godman, Ibis, 1883, pp. 131, 202, pl. viii.

Paradisea susanna, Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. Wales, viii. p. 21 (1883).

THE discovery of a new Bird of Paradise must always be a matter of interest to naturalists, and especially when the species proves to be of so fine a character as the present bird. The home of *Paradisea decora* is Fergusson Island, in the D'Entrecasteaux group, whence comes the beautiful *Manucodia comrii*, also figured by us in the 'Birds of New Guinea.'

We owe the discovery of this beautiful bird to Mr. A. Goldie, to whose energies science has been indebted for many years. He has given the following account of its capture :—

"The Birds of Paradise were shot on Fergusson Island, one of the D'Entrecasteaux group, in the mountains, at a considerable elevation above the sea, the first specimen obtained having been secured at the lowest point. The plumed males and the younger individuals were generally seen three or four together. Once heard, their call was unmistakable, being very like that of *Paradisea raggiana*; but the plumed and wired birds, after giving that call a few times, added to it a peculiar shrill whistle. Their motions whilst calling were identical with those of *P. raggiana*; but, so far as we were able to observe, they had no particular tree for dancing in. The females were found alone.

"We neither saw nor heard *P. raggiana* on these islands; and the new bird is not found on the mainland. On showing it to the natives of Chad's Bay and China Straits along with a specimen of *Paradisea raggiana*, they, in both cases, made us to understand that the latter is found in their country, whilst the former is not; but two or three of them in China Straits who had traded to the D'Entrecasteaux Islands made signs that the new bird was to be found there."

The nearest ally of the present species is *P. raggiana*, and, like that bird, it has red flank-plumes; but it differs in its yellow back and grey chest, the latter extending up to the green throat, and not being separated from it by a yellow collar.

The description of the species, as given by Messrs. Salvin and Godman, is so complete that we transcribe it entire. We may add that the typical series, described by them, is now in the British Museum.

"Fergusson Island was so named by Capt. Moresby, who calculated that the mountain called Kilkerran (the highest near the northern coast) reaches an altitude of 6000 feet above the sea. Two other large islands, Goodenough Island and Normandy Island, lie close to Fergusson Island, and form the chief islands of the group.

"*Paradisea decora*, as we have proposed to call this Bird of Paradise, combines the characters of some of the previously known species. The side-plumes are like those of *P. sanguinea*, each feather having its barbs towards the end wide apart and destitute of barbules. These feathers are similarly formed in *P. sanguinea*; but in the present bird the barbs are even wider apart. The 'wires' of the tail are like those of *P. apoda*, *P. minor*, and *P. raggiana*, the feathers having a simple stem on which the atrophied barbs become more and more evanescent till they disappear at the middle of the feather to reappear again at its extremity. In *P. sanguinea* the stem is broad and flattened.

"The side-plumes of *P. decora* are very peculiar, inasmuch as a number of the anterior plumes are quite short, with the barbs of each feather much lengthened towards the end; the distal ends of these feathers are deep rich vinous red, and appear as if the pigment which colours the elongated plumes were concentrated in these shorter ones.

"The breast of *P. decora* is of a soft vinaceous lilac, and in this respect differs from that of all its congeners. The throat is velvet-green, showing two shades, owing to the feathers nearer the chin reflecting the light at a different angle. This darker-looking patch is larger in *P. decora* than in the other species. The back, except the narrow green forehead, is straw-coloured, like that of *P. minor*.

"Mr. Goldie's series contains males in all stages of development. The youngest are like the females, but with the throat green; the breast is of a ruddy tint, vermiculated with dusky marks on each feather. In the first plumage the two central rectrices are narrow and elongated, but with barbs &c. as in the perfect feather; they project beyond the rest of the tail-feathers, the length of the projection varying. In some males (perhaps young birds, perhaps birds out of nuptial plumage) these feathers are much more elongated and the length of the barbs of the middle of each feather is much reduced; but these lengthen again so as to form a small spatule.

"The moult to the nuptial plumage proceeds in various ways: sometimes the lilac feathers of the breast are the first to appear; in others the wiry rectrices are the first to take the place of their predecessors. In some cases these latter are fully grown before the ornamental side-plumes make their appearance. In others, again, they grow contemporaneously with these plumes."

The figures in the Plate represent the adult male and female of about the natural size, and have been drawn from the typical specimens in the British Museum.

[R. B. S.]