## HAPALOTIS CONDITOR, Gould.

## Building Hapalotis.

Mus conditor, Gould in Sturt's Narr. of Exp. to Central Australia, vol. i. pl. in p. 120; vol. ii. App. p. 7.

For a knowledge of this curious little animal, we are indebted to the researches of Captain Sturt, who, during his recent expedition into the central portion of Australia, found it inhabiting the brushes of the Darling; there is little doubt that it had been previously met with by Major Mitchell, who, in the second volume of his "Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia," page 263, when speaking of the specimens collected during the journey, mentions, among others, "the flat-tailed rat from the scrubs of the Darling, where it builds an enormous nest of branches and boughs, so interlaced as to be proof against any attacks of the native dog;" but as the specimen he procured appears never to have been described, the credit of its first introduction to science is due to the first-mentioned traveller.

In its general form and dentition it is very nearly allied to the members of the genus Mus, but its lengthened and broad hind-feet, large ears, and its habit of constructing a nest, are characters which in an equal degree ally it to the Hapaloti, with which, upon a closer examination of its structure, I am induced now to associate it.

Captain Sturt states that it "inhabits the brushes of the Darling, but was not found beyond latitude 30°. It builds a nest of small sticks varying in length from three to eight inches, and in thickness from that of a quill to that of the thumb, arranged in a most systematic manner so as to form a compact cone like a bee-hive, about four feet in diameter and three feet high; those at the foundation are so disposed as to form a compact flooring, and the entire fabric is so firm as almost to defy destruction except by fire. The animal, which is like an ordinary rat, only that it has longer ears and the hind-feet are disproportioned to the fore-feet, lives in communities, and traverses the mound by means of passages leading into the apartments in the centre. One of these nests or mounds had five holes or entrances at the base, nearly equidistant from each other, with passages leading from them to a hole in the ground beneath, in which I am led to conclude they had their store. There were two nests of grass in the centre, with passages running up to them diagonally from the bottom; the nests were close together, but in separate compartments, with passages communicating from the one to the other."

Fur soft and silky to the touch; general colour greyish brown, becoming of a darker hue down the centre of the head and back, in consequence of the tips of the hairs being dark brown; under surface pale buff, the whole of the fur dark slate-grey at the base; a slight wash of rufous between the ears; whiskers very long, exceedingly fine, and of a blackish brown hue; fore-feet brown, hinder feet pale brown; tail brown above, paler beneath.

The figures are of the natural size.