

DASYURUS VIVERRINUS.

Variable Dasyurus.

The Spotted Opossum, Phillip's Voy. to Bot. Bay, p. 147. pl. 15.

Tapoa Tafa, White, Journ. of a Voy. to New South Wales, p. 285 and pl.

Didelphis Viverrina, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. i. pt. ii. p. 491. pl. 111.

——— *guttatus*, Desm. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat.

Dasyurus Viverrinus et *D. Maugei*, Geoff. Ann. du Mus., tom. iii. pp. 359, 360.—Temm. Mon. de Mamm., pp. 71, 72. pl. 7. figs. 1-8, skull and lower jaw.—Waterh. Nat. Hist. Mamm., vol. i. pp. 442, 444.—Ib. Nat. Lib. *Marsupialia*, pp. 133, 135, pl. 7.—Cat. of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. p. 97.

THAT the specific terms *Viverrinus* and *Maugei* have reference to one and the same animal, I had abundant opportunities of ascertaining during my residence in Van Diemen's Land; where not unfrequently litters came under my notice in which the prevailing colour of some of the young was black, and in others grey: to the former the old specific term of *Viverrinus* was applied, and to the latter the more modern one of *Maugei*.

The habits and economy of the present species are very similar to those of the Spotted-tailed *Dasyurus*; it also inhabits almost exclusively the same countries—Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. During the daytime, hollow trees, holes in the rocks, and stony places form the retreats of this pretty animal; as night approaches, it becomes alert and active, and seeks for its living prey, which consists of small quadrupeds and birds without restriction to any particular species.

I believe that six will be found to be the normal number of the young, since that was the number contained in a litter I obtained in Van Diemen's Land, of which three were black, and three grey-coloured animals: the former, I am assured, are not, however, so regularly met with, and must be considered the variety. Mr. Waterhouse remarks, in his "Natural History of the Mammalia"—

"As no individuals presenting an intermediate condition of colouring are found, I at first suspected that the difference might be sexual; but such is not the case, since I have seen male specimens, both of the black and grey varieties. The former vary only from brown black to black; the under parts of the body and the feet are generally brownish. The fur on the back is grey next the skin, and that on the abdomen is also grey, but of a paler hue; the white spots on the body vary in size, some being very small, and others more than half an inch in diameter; on the head there are a few small white spots; the tail is bushy, being provided with long hairs, averaging on the basal portion about an inch in length, but of double that length at the point; on the under surface they are, however, comparatively short; in length the tail is about equal to the body; the ears are tolerably large and somewhat attenuated at the apex; they are clothed with short black hairs, which are most abundant on the outer surface, but are also plentiful on the inner surface at the point and near the anterior angle, in which latter part the hairs are considerably longer than elsewhere; the back of the ear is of a pale pink colour in the living animal, as is also the naked tip of the nose and the soles of the feet, the latter being also destitute of hair, but covered with small fleshy tubercles."

In the light-coloured animals:—"The general colour of the fur is greyish, but much suffused with yellow; each hair of the ordinary fur on the upper parts of the body is of a pale grey colour at the root, pale yellow near the point, and black at the point, and the coarser interspersed hairs have their visible portions almost entirely black; on the feet and under parts of the body the hairs are of an uniform yellowish white tint; the sides of the face are almost of an uniform pale yellow; the ears are for the most part rather sparingly clothed with pale hairs; at their base externally is a white spot; the tail is bushy, of the same general hue as the body at the base, but becomes gradually paler towards the opposite extremity, and is terminated with white or dirty yellow-white hairs."

The figures represent both states of the animal of the natural size.