PERAMELES OBESULA, *Geoff.*

Short-nosed Perameles.

Didelphys obesula, Shaw, Nat. Misc., vol. viii. pl. 298.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. i. p. 490.
Perameles obesula, Geoff. Ann. du Mus., tom. iv. p. 64. pl. 45.—Waterh. Nat. Hist. of Mamm., vol. i. p. 368.—Gunn in Proc. Roy. Soc. of Van Diem. Land, vol. ii. p. 82.
Isoodon obesula, Desm. in Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xvi. p. 409.
Perameles fusciventer, Gray in App. to Grey's Journ., vol. ii. p. 407.
——— *affinis*, Gray, List of Mamm. in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 96.
Gwĕn-dee, Aborigines of Perth, Western Australia.
Quoint, Aborigines of King George's Sound.

Having had many opportunities of observing this animal in a state of nature, both in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales, I am enabled personally to state, that it does not, like some of the other species of the genus, such as *Perameles Gunni*, *P. fasciata* and *P. myosura*, dwell among the stony ridges of the open country, but evinces a preference for the low, damp, swampy places, overgrown with dense green herbage, which occur on the borders, and even within the great forests. In Van Diemen's Land it is more frequently met with on the southern side of the River Derwent than elsewhere. This great river, indeed, forms the line of demarcation to many species both of quadrupeds and birds; its southern side being clothed with vast forests of *Eucalypti*, growing on a stiff clayey soil, while the opposite bank is of a light sandy character, suitable to the growth of *Banksiæ* and *Acaciæ*; the former is the kind of country preferred by the animal under consideration, and, as might be supposed, it is found in all parts of Van Diemen's Land wherever similar localities occur; it is also to be found in like situations on the islands in Bass's Straits, in New South Wales, and in Southern and Western Australia. Specimens from all these countries are now before me, and although the range extends over an area of nearly three thousand miles, I am unable to detect any differences of sufficient value to warrant the establishment of a second species. The only perceptible difference between the examples from Western Australia and those from New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, is a slightly darker tint in the colouring of the under surface of the former: very old males from each country attain to nearly a foot in length, exclusive of the tail, while the adult female is considerably smaller, and immature animals may be found of all sizes, according to age and sex. While engaged in my observations on the "Birds of Australia," I have very frequently trodden upon the almost invisible nest of this species and aroused the sleeping pair within, which would then dart away with the utmost rapidity, and seek safety in the dense scrub, beneath a stone, or in the hollow bole of a tree; that is, if their career were not stopped by a discharge from my gun, or by my dogs.

The following note is from the pen of the late Mr. Gilbert, and comprises his observations of the animal in Western Australia, which, although they do not quite agree with my own, I give in his own words:—

"This little animal is abundant in every part of the colony, and is found in every variety of situation; in thick scrubby places, among the high grass growing along the banks of rivers and swamps, and also among the dense underwood both on dry elevated land and in moist situations. It makes a nest of short pieces of dried sticks, coarse grasses, leaves, &c., sometimes mixed with earth, and so artfully contrived to resemble the surrounding ground, that only an experienced eye can detect it. When built in dry places, the top is flat, and on a level with the ground, but in moist situations the nest is often raised in the form of a heap, to the height of about twelve inches; the means of access and exit being most adroitly closed by the animal both on entering and emerging. The *P. obesula* is generally found in pairs: when driven from its nest, it takes to the first hollow log or hole in the ground that occurs. Athough its usual food consists of insects, it occasionally feeds on grain, and I have several times seen it in great numbers in a wheat-stack. Specimens are sometimes met with of a very large size, which circumstance has induced a belief among the settlers that there are two species, but such is certainly not the case."

No one has more diligently endeavoured to unravel the confusion which has hitherto existed respecting