CHŒROPUS CASTANOTIS.

Chestnut-eared Chœropus.

Chœropus castanotis, Gray, Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. ix. p. 42.—List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. Coll., p. 96.
Chœropus ecaudatus, Ogilby in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VI. p. 26.
Chœropus ecaudatus, Mitch. Trav. in Australia, vol. ii. p. 132. pl. 27.—Waterh. Nat. Lib. Mamm., vol. ix. (Marsupialia), p. 163.
Buŕ-da, Aborigines of the Walzemara district.
Wot-da, Aborigines of the interior from York, Western Australia.

For our first knowledge of this very singular animal we are indebted to the researches of Major Sir Thomas L. Mitchell, who during one of his expeditions into the interior of South-eastern Australia procured a specimen on the left bank of the Murray, and of which he gave a figure in the second volume of his "Travels." The specimen itself is deposited in the museum at Sydney, but a drawing by Sir Thomas Mitchell having been submitted to Mr. Ogilby's inspection, he at once perceived that it differed from every other known group of animals, and consequently made it the type of a new genus, assigning to it, from the presumed absence of any tail, the specific appellation of *ecaudatus*. Since that period an example from nearly the same locality has been sent to this country by His Excellency George Grey, Esq., Governor of South Australia, and two others by Mr. Gilbert from Western Australia. All these specimens are furnished with a well-developed tail, and the want of that organ in the Major's animal was doubtless the result of accident; hence it became necessary that the specific term applied to it by Mr. Ogilby should be exchanged for one more appropriate, and Mr. Gray has therefore assigned to it that of *castanotis*, from the deep chestnut colouring of the ears.

"That the *Chœropus*," remarks Mr. Gilbert, "should occasionally lose its tail is not singular, for I have frequently found examples of the *Mala* (*Perameles myosurus*) with their tail shortened or entirely lost, apparently by some accident."

The specimen in the Sydney museum and that from South Australia above mentioned, and which is now in the British Museum, differ considerably, both in colour and in the length of the hair that covers the body, from those from Western Australia, so much so in fact as almost to induce a belief of their being distinct; but until further information has been obtained respecting this very curious form, I prefer considering them as identical, and figuring them as such under Mr. Gray's name of *castanotis*; but should future research prove the Western Australian animal to be distinct, the specific term *occidentalis* might be applied to it.

In Western Australia the *Chœropus* is confined to the interior; it makes a nest precisely similar to that of *Perameles myosurus*, except that it is more abundantly supplied with leaves. It is sometimes found in the densest scrub, where from the thickness of the vegetation it is extremely difficult to be procured.

As its dentition would indicate, its food consists of insects and their larvæ, and vegetables of some kind, probably the bark of trees, bulbous and tuberous roots.

One of the two specimens received from Western Australia is in the collection of the British Museum, the other in that of the Earl of Derby.

The two front figures in the Plate represent the animals from Western Australia, and the central one that from South Australia. All the figures are of the natural size, and coloured so accurately as to render a description unnecessary.