

X
E

I must here speak of this fine species in a state of nature, and the extent of its range over the great continent of South America. Examples are frequently sent from Cayenne both to this country and to France, but I have never seen specimens from any locality farther to the north; the great delta of the Amazon, that is, the forests which clothe the sides of that river and the islands near to its mouth, are the situations in which it is most numerous; but even here it would seem that it is not universally spread, since Mr. Wallace informs me that it is not seen in the immediate neighbourhood of Para, while it is common in the islands on the Guiana side of the river. Mr. Wallace also found it higher up the Amazon, as well as in the same districts on the River Madeira that are inhabited by the *Pteroglossus Beauharnaisi* or *Curl-crested Araçari*, and states that he usually observed it in small groups, three or four in number, and that its vicinity was always indicated by its loud croaking notes. Following up the River Madeira, the tributaries of which commence in the Andes, I may state that I have myself seen skins from the borders of these streams in Bolivia, and it is spoken of by Azara as an inhabitant of Paraguay.

It is from the pens of His Highness the Prince Maximilian of Wied, and the late M. John Natterer, that we derive the greatest amount of information respecting this species. Both these naturalists observed it in Brazil, which may be considered its central habitat.

"This species," says Prince Maximilian, "is never found near the coast, but is plentiful in the interior of the province of Minas Geraes and Bahia; that it is also abundant in the southern part of Brazil is proved by Mr. Sellow having found it in considerable numbers in latitude 32° S. Those observed in the vicinity of Bahia were very shy, the result of their having been repeatedly fired at by the inhabitants in defence of their fruit-trees, and to procure them for food; notwithstanding which, the desire to feed upon the oranges and guavas induced them to approach very near the town at the season when those fruits were ripening.

"Very pretty little powder-flasks are occasionally made of their large and finely coloured bills."

M. Natterer, who first met with it in the province of St. Paul's and afterwards on the road to Goyaz and Mattogrosso, on the banks of the Amazon and on the Upper Rio Branco, remarks that it will probably be found in all parts of Brazil, and believes that the bird prefers woods adjoining sandy plains, for he more than once met with it in low steppe-coppices, where ripe fruits were to be found. He generally met with it in small families, and observed that the bill varied in length according to the age or sex of the bird, and that the note was deeper than that of all the other members of the family. It resembles *grrr* or *grrra*.

I find the following note with regard to the nidification of this species in Edwards's entertaining "Voyage up the Amazon"—"The nests of Toucans are represented in works of Natural History as being constructed in the hollows of trees. It may be so in many cases and with some species. The only nest we ever saw, which was of the Toco Toucan, was in the fork of a large tree over the water upon the Amazon." The only observation I have to make on this passage is, that it is desirable that the nidification of the bird should be detailed by other observers before full reliance be placed upon the assertion that the bird makes a nest, for the hollows of decayed trees are the usual incubating places of all the Toucans.

As is the case with all the Toucans, the sexes, although assimilating in their colouring and markings, differ very considerably in size and in the relative admeasurements of the bill, the female being always nearly a third smaller than the male; the young birds assume the colouring of the adult at a very early age, but have a soft, almost pulpy bill, in which the fine colouring and the denticulations are merely indicated.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size.