

MELANOPITTA NOVÆ-GUINÆÆ.

Papuan Pitta.

- Pitta atricapilla*, Quoy et Gaim. Voy. de l'Astrol. i. p. 258, pl. 8, fig. 3 (1830).
Pitta novæ-guinææ, Müll. & Schleg. Verhandl. nat. Gesch., fol., Zool. *Pitta*, pp. 19, 20 (1839-44).—Gray, Gen. B. i. p. 214 (1846).—Sclater, Proc. Linn. Soc. ii. p. 158 (1858).—Gray, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1858, pp. 175, 191.—Id. Cat. B. New Guinea, pp. 26, 56 (1859).—Id. Proc. Zool. Soc. 1861, p. 434.—Schlegel, Vog. Nederl. Ind., *Pitta*, pp. 7, 21, pl. ii. fig. 4 (1863).—Id. Mus. Pays-Bas, *Pitta*, p. 4 (1863).—Wallace, Ibis, 1864, p. 102.—Finsch, Neu-Guinea, p. 167 (1865).—Schlegel, Nederl. Tijdschr. Dierk. iii. p. 189 (1866), iv. p. 15 (1871).—Gray, Hand-l. B. i. p. 295, no. 4358 (1869).—Schleg. Mus. Pays-Bas, Revue *Pitta*, p. 6 (1874).—Rosenb. Reist. n. Geelvinksbai, p. 114 (1875).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genova, vii. p. 777 (1875), viii. p. 398 (1876), ix. p. 210 (1876).—Gould, Birds of New Guinea, pt. iv. (1877).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genova, ix. p. 128 (1877), x. p. 11 (1877).—Sharpe, Journ. Linn. Soc. xiii. p. 315 (1877), xiv. p. 687 (1879).—Salvad. & D'Albert. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genova, xiv. p. 84 (1879).—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. New S. Wales, iii. p. 277 (1879), iv. p. 98 (1879).—Legge, Birds of Ceylon, p. 689 (1879).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genova, xv. p. 184 (1880).—Id. Orn. della Papuasias &c. p. 380 (1881).
Brachyurus novæ-guinææ, Bp. Consp. i. p. 256 (1850).—Wall. Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. (2) xx. p. 477 (1857).—Rosenb. Journ. f. Orn. 1864, p. 119.—Elliot, Ibis, 1870, p. 420.
Melanopitta novæ-guinææ, Bp. Consp. Volucr. Anis. p. 7 (1854).
Brachyurus (Melanopitta) novæ-guinææ, Elliot, Monogr. pl. 27 (1861-63).
Pitta papuensis, Gray, Hand-l. B. i. p. 295, no. 4361 (1869; ? ex Schleg. MS.).
Pitta waigiouensis, Schleg. MS., teste Salvad. Orn. della Papuasias &c. p. 385 (1881).

THE Papuan Pitta, although by its name of *novæ-guinææ* one might suppose that it is confined to the great island of New Guinea, is not really restricted to that locality, but is spread over a habitat almost as extensive as that of *Erythropitta mackloti*. It inhabits the whole of New Guinea; and a long list of specimens is given by Count Salvadori in his great work on the Ornithology of Papuasias, showing that the Italian travellers Beccari and D'Albertis, and the well-known collector Bruijn, have discovered it in every portion visited by themselves or their hunters. In all the parts explored on the Arfak Mountains it was met with, as well as in Salwatti, while numerous specimens enriched Signor D'Albertis's collections from Southern New Guinea, where he procured the species on the Fly river, and further eastward on Yule Island and the mainland of South-east Papua. We have ourselves seen specimens from the interior of Port Moresby and also from East Cape, the latter procured by Mr. Charles Hunstein, the discoverer of the remarkable *Clytoceyx rex*. It has also been said to occur in the peninsula of Cape York, on Mr. Cockerell's authority; but we are certain that many of the latter's Aru-Island birds were mixed up in his Cape-York collections, and we do not believe that the bird has ever been really procured in Northern Australia.

Returning to its insular distribution, we find that it has been met with on the following islands—Batanta, Waigiou, Gagie, Koffiao, and Mysol; and it is not at all rare in the Aru Islands, where, according to Von Rosenberg, it is called by the natives "Kaberber." Professor Schlegel has pointed out that the birds from the last-named locality are constantly smaller than those from other places; but Count Salvadori, who has compared large series from all parts inhabited by the species, does not consider that there is any real difference to be seen in the Aru birds.

Great variation takes place also in the size and extent of the white spots on the quills, which appear to vanish entirely on some occasions; and Schlegel mentions a specimen from Waigiou in which the white spot existed on one wing and not on the other; and Count Salvadori has found these white marks largest in young birds, whence he surmises that their disappearance takes place with age.

In the Aru Islands, Mr. Wallace states that both the present species and *Erythropitta mackloti* quite baffled his Malay hunters; but the little Papuan boys, creeping stealthily through the thick jungle, shot them with blunt prong-headed arrows, and thus procured him many fine specimens. Baron von Rosenberg states that they are most active birds, and are always elevating and depressing the tail like the European Wagtails; during this movement the fine red colour of the belly catches the eye even at some distance. At Wonambai he found both the present bird and *Erythropitta mackloti* in great abundance, and found the nests and eggs. The nests were rough structures made of grass, mosses, and leaves, and contained three or four white eggs spotted with reddish or ashy grey. The food of the species consists of insects.

Head and neck black; back and wings dark green; lesser wing-coverts light blue; primaries dark