

NOTE ON THE HABITAT OF THE NAKED-EYED  
COCKATOO, *CACATUA GYMNOPIS*, SCLATER.

BY ALFRED J. NORTH, F.L.S., ASSISTANT IN ORNITHOLOGY,  
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM.

This bird was described by Dr. Sclater (P.Z.S. 1871, p. 43) from a single living example at that time in the Gardens of the Zoological Society. As an uncertainty exists about the true habitat of this species, I embraced the opportunity of obtaining all information about two living specimens, the first I have seen, that are at present in one of the bird dealers' shops in the old George Street Markets. I there met the owner, M. Eugene Etable, a well-known collector of Australian birds, who informed me that he had taken one of them from a nesting-place in the hollow branch of a tree, and had captured the other when just able to flutter along the ground, at a place about six miles south of Burketown, in Northern Queensland. Burketown is situated 17° 47' S. lat. and 139° 34' E. long., on the left bank of the Albert River, about 21 miles in a direct line from the Gulf of Carpentaria; there this species is very common, and may frequently be seen flying over the town. For the purposes of breeding it resorts to the hollow limbs or trunks of trees, and deposits two pure white eggs on the decaying wood or dust which these cavities contain; usually they are low down and within six feet of the ground. M. Etable informs me it breeds only during the wet season, and is influenced by its being early or late, the normal breeding time commencing in February and continuing till the beginning of May. During the dry season they assemble in large flocks and remain in the neighbourhood of tanks and waterholes. M. Etable has observed these birds, but not in such great numbers, as far east and south in the intervening country over which he has travelled between Croydon, Hughenden and Barcaldine.



One of the specimens referred to is twelve months old, the other ten; both are hardy and live well in confinement, their owner having taken them from Burketown to Antwerp and back before bringing them to Sydney. They are very tame and like to be caressed, climbing on one's finger and gently nibbling it, and already give promise of being good talkers, their enunciation of the words "Halloo!" "Pretty Boy!" &c., fragments of the common acquired stock vocabulary of the family *Cacatuidæ*, being very clear and good, resembling that of *Licmetis nasica*. These birds have the irides very dark brown; bare space around and below the eye leaden-blue; bill whitish tinged with blue; legs and feet mealy-grey, and the younger one has only the lores stained with red, and with no rosy bases to the feathers of the crest, head, hind neck and upper portion of the breast; the naked space too around the eye is more circular in form, agreeing with the original description and figure of *C. sanguinea*, except in the colour of the bare space around the eye, which is leaden-blue instead of white, as figured by Gould in *C. sanguinea*, but to which no reference is made in the description. Dr. Sclater, however, had a living specimen in the Zoological Gardens that had been in confinement several years, and which he identified as *C. sanguinea*, at the time he described *C. gymnopsis*, but the exact locality whence it came is not known.

In the British Museum Catalogue of *Psittaci*, Count Salvadori gives the habitat of *C. gymnopsis*, as "South Australia (also Northern and North-Western Australia?)." Now the range of this species is known, the note of interrogation may be removed from the latter localities, for in addition to the living examples referred to from Northern Queensland there are four specimens in the Macleayan Museum at the University; two of them from the Gulf of Carpentaria and two obtained by Spalding at Port Darwin; there is also a specimen in the Australian Museum Collection, procured by E. J. Cairn, at Cambridge Gulf, N.W. Australia, in 1886.



North, Alfred J. 1894. "Note on the habitat of the naked-eyed cockatoo, *Cacatua gymnopsis*, Sclater." *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* 9, 37–38. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.18092>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/29750>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.18092>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/18092>

**Holding Institution**

MBLWHOI Library

**Sponsored by**

MBLWHOI Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: NOT\_IN\_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.