

remarking that it was found on the living leaves of grasses, violets, &c., although hitherto noted only on dead leaves.

Referring to this he replied:—"The plasmodium feeds on dead leaves, but when the time for fruiting arrives it leaves its feeding habitat and climbs on to the surrounding herbage or sticks, where the conditions are favourable to the ripening of the fruit, but it does not feed on the living leaves. The late Dr. Rex, of Philadelphia, gives so pleasing an account of this habit that I quote the passage: 'I recall an instance in which the plasmodium of *Diachæa leucopoda* (= *Diachæa elegans*) crept up a clump of blackberry stems to a foot in height, and thence upon the radiating threads of a spider's web suspended between them, where it matured its exquisite sporangia.' We have seen a growth in a damp wood where the plasmodium had crept up herbaceous stems to a height of about 2 feet from the dead leaves on which it had fed, and there formed a vast number of sporangia."

This crawling habit, of course, is not confined to this species. I remember a case where spent tan was used as a mulch and the so-called "flowers of tan" (*Fuligo septica*, Gmelin) had crept up the stems of herbaceous plants to the height of a foot or more, and the yellow plasmodium was very conspicuous. Such instances show the necessity for scientific caution and careful observation before determining the habits of these organisms, with their plant-like structure and their animal-like motions.

## DESCRIPTION OF A NEW PARRAKEET FROM THE BURKE DISTRICT, NORTH QUEENSLAND.

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### ORDER PSITTACI.

#### FAM. CACATUIDÆ.

#### Sub-Fam. Platycercinæ.

#### **Platycercus macgillivrayi**, sp. nov.

*Adult*.—General colour above verditer-green, the feathers on the occiput, hind neck, and back tipped or broadly edged with green, and the centres of those on the lower back, rump, upper tail and central wing coverts distinctly shaded with yellow; primaries and primary coverts black, their outer webs deep blue, the apical half of the outer primaries edged with ashy-grey; inner secondaries and scapulars verditer-green shaded with yellow; outer series of the greater wing coverts pale blue; lesser wing coverts, like the back, margin of the shoulder, and under wing coverts, rich turquoise-blue; two central tail-feathers green, the next feather on either side green, passing into blue on the apical portion and bluish-white at the tip, the remainder deep blue at the base and gradually passing into bluish-white at the tip; cheeks and

a ring of feathers around the eye blue; lower sides of the throat and neck verditer-green; a collar on the nape and a broad band on the lower breast and abdomen clear rich yellow; feathers on the chest, thighs, and the under tail coverts verditer-green with yellowish centres; bill bluish horn colour, paler at the tip; legs and feet blackish-brown. Total length of skin 13.5 inches, wing 6.4, tail 7.2, bill from forehead 0.8, tarsus 0.8.

*Habitat*.—From Cloncurry north to Normanton near the shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland.

*Remarks*.—Judging by the bill and feet it is apparently a very old bird, and by the abraded outer primary and some of the lateral tail-feathers, is hardly through the moult.

In general colour *P. macgillivrayi* resembles *P. occidentalis*, described by me from North-west Australia—Rec. Austr. Mus., vol. ii., p. 83 (1893)—but has the head almost uniform in colour with the upper parts, instead of blackish-brown as in that species. *P. barnardi*, its nearest ally on the eastern side of the continent, differs from *P. macgillivrayi* in having the forehead red in all stages of its plumage, from the nestling to the adult, although very much paler in the former and increasing in depth of colour with age; in having only the anterior portion of the cheeks washed with blue, the yellow band on the abdomen narrower and more or less deeply tinged with orange, the lesser wing-coverts deep blue, and the back bluish-grey.

This species, which I have named after its discoverer, Mr. Alexander Sykes Macgillivray, was obtained by him at Leilavale station, on the Fullarton River, about 30 miles east of Cloncurry township, North Queensland. It will be known by the vernacular name of Macgillivray's Parrakeet. For an opportunity of describing it I am indebted to Dr. W. Macgillivray, of Hamilton, Victoria, who has at various times kindly sent me specimens for examination that were collected by his brother in the same district. With the above described specimen Dr. Macgillivray has sent me the following note:—"My brother states these birds are common about Cloncurry, and he has noted them to within a short distance of Normanton, near the shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria."

It is remarkable that the genus *Platycercus*, so well represented in the southern portion of the continent, has hitherto had only a single representative, *P. amathusiæ*, in the Gulf district—Ramsay, Tab. List Austr. Bds., p. 16 (1888). This species, too, must be extremely rare, for I can find no record of a single example being obtained there; neither is there to be found a specimen from that district in the Australian Museum or Macleay Museum, or of any other species of *Platycercus*.

In vol. xx. of the "Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum," Count Salvadori has adopted Bonaparte's subdivision of the *Platycerci*, placing *P. barnardi*, *P. semitorquatus*, and *P. zonarius* in the genus *Barnardius*, in which, therefore, he would include my

*P. occidentalis* and the present species. I agree with Gould, however, that "such terms are objectionable when employed generically," and prefer, for the slight differences in external characters, not to separate these birds from *Platycercus*. Dr. P. L. Sclater, in a "List of the Vertebrated Animals in the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London," 9th edition, p. 363 (1896), also retains the abovementioned species in the genus *Platycercus*.

Relative to *P. barnardi*, both Dr. Ramsay, in his "Tabular List of Australian Birds," and Count Salvadori, in vol. xx. of the "Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum," omit Queensland from the geographical distribution of this species. I met with *P. barnardi* nesting in the Coolibah trees near the Queensland border in November, 1897, and saw young birds that were taken from the nesting-place in the hole of a tree in Queensland. Mr. Kendal Broadbent has also recorded it as common at Charleville, on the Warrego River, 520 miles west of Brisbane, and obtained a pair as far north as Barcaldine, in Central Queensland.

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#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CARTER'S DESERT-BIRD, *EREMIORNIS CARTERI*, NORTH.

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Since the publication of my description of this species in the last issue, page 79, I have received through Mr. Keartland the skin of a male obtained by Mr. Carter on the 2nd July, 1899, at North-west Cape, North-west Australia. It is apparently an older bird than the female procured by Mr. Carter the previous day in the same locality, and differs from the type by the absence of the long upper tail coverts, although the abnormally long under tail coverts are present as in the female. The upper parts are more strongly shaded with rufous, all the tail feathers are washed on their outer webs with rufous, and their tips are light rufous, the tips increasing in size towards the outermost feather, and gradually becoming paler; the centre of the lower breast and abdomen is washed with ochraceous-buff. Total length of skin 5.65 inches, wing 2.1, central tail feathers 2.6, bill from forehead 0.48, depth and width of bill at nostril 0.15, tarsus 0.52, middle toe 0.42, with claw 0.52, hind toe 0.25, with claw 0.42.

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#### CORRESPONDENCE.

##### THE DISTRIBUTION OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

*To the Editor of the Victorian Naturalist.*

SIR,—As I have for years taken a deep interest in the "distribution of Australian birds" and was unavoidably absent from the meeting of the Field Naturalists' Club held 9th April, 1900,



North, Alfred J. 1900. "Description of a new parrakeet from the Burke district, north Queensland." *The Victorian Naturalist* 17, 91–93.

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