

COULD THIS HAVE BEEN ANOTHER GRAY'S LORY?

by Herbert Schifter

In Vienna Zoo (Austria), better known as Tiergarten Schönbrunn, a lory was received on April 18th 1944 which looked quite similar to the bird named *Trichoglossus coccineifrons* by G. R. Gray in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* in 1858. The specimen had been collected in the Aru Islands by Alfred Russel Wallace during his stay there from January-March 1857. It was figured in Mivart's *A Monograph of the Lories, or Brush-Tongued Parrots* published in 1896 where the name Gray's Lory was given to the bird. Subsequently it has been considered to have been a hybrid, possibly between *T. haematodus nigrogularis* (the resident subspecies of *T. haematodus* on the Aru Islands) and *Chalcopsitta sintilata*, the Yellow-streaked Lory.

In his account of his journey to the Aru Islands Wallace (1857) did not mention how and where he got the specimen of *T. coccineifrons* he only said that "a most beautiful brush-tongued parrot, closely allied to *T. cyanogrammus* (the former name of the subspecies of the Rainbow Lory or Lorikeet occurring on the Aru Islands) had been very common in Dobo" (a small island near the west coast of Kepulauan Aru). In the Aru Islands in 1857 Wallace had also collected the type specimens of *Chalcopsitta rubrifrons* (now *C. sintillata rubrifrons*) and *T. nigrogularis* (now *T. haematodus nigrogularis*) both of which were named by G. R. Gray in 1858 in the same paper as *T. coccineifrons*.

Unfortunately nothing is known about the probable hybrid origin of the specimen received by Vienna Zoo in 1944. It came from Edgar Glas, at that time a well known parrot breeder and dealer in exotic birds in Austria. It was probably Prof. Dr Otto Antonius, Director of the zoo at that time, who considered it to be very similar to the lory named *Trichoglossus coccineifrons* by Gray and therefore in the translation of the Latin name the Vienna bird was given the German name *Rotstirnlori* (Red-fronted Lorikeet). The bird lived in the zoo until its death on October 30th 1962. It was not given to the museum as had been usual in the past probably due to some cases of 'Parrot disease' at that time. Fortunately I had taken some transparencies of it earlier that year one of which was reproduced recently in *Papageien* 2/2005, p.59, two other pictures of it are reproduced here. The bird was very well known to me during the many years that I was a regular visitor to the zoo and remained in good condition until its death, though it had not been very agile during the last year and was very often sitting on the floor of the aviary.

Certainly one of its parents had been a subspecies of *T. haematodus*, but the Yellow-streaked Lory was practically unknown in continental aviculture

in the 1940s. However, the Violet-necked Lory *Eos squamata* (*ricinata*) was kept in Austria at that time and may have been the other parent.



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This bird known as the *Rotstirnlory* lived in Vienna Zoo from 1944-1962.



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Another view of the same bird.

References

- Gray, G.R. 1858. A List of the Birds, with Descriptions of New Species obtained by Mr. Alfred R. Wallace in the Aru and Ké Islands. (Aves Pl. CXXXII-CXXXVII), *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, Part XXVI:169-198.
- Mivart, St. G. 1896. *A Monograph of the Lories, or Brush-Tongued Parrots, comprising the family Loriidae*.
- Wallace, A.R. 1857. On the Natural History of the Aru Islands. *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, Supplement to Vol.XX. December 1857 (Ann. & Mag. N. Hist. Ser.2. Vol.XX.Suppl.):473-485.

Wallace's bird is in The Natural History Museum collection at Tring. Robert Prys-Jones, Head of the Bird Group there was extremely helpful and wrote to say: "Although still in Wallace's personal collection at the time of its description, it was passed to the BMNH in 1873 along with many other Wallace specimens." It still bears an original Wallace label. Dr Prys-Jones provided copies of the appropriate pages (pp.169 & 183) in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London (1858), along with copies of the appropriate pages relating to T. coccineifrons in the Catalogue of the Psittaci, or Parrots, in the Collection of the British Museum by T. Salvadori (1891) and Type-Specimens of Birds in the British Museum (Natural History), Vol.1 Non-Passerines by Rachel L. M. Warren (1966). The latter (p.66) states that the bird was an adult male and was collected by Wallace in the Aru Islands, January 11th - March 12th 1857. It has the Registration No.1873.5.12.1504.

In the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London (p.183), Gray described it as: Green; front and spots on the head carmine; head and chin whitish blue; nape and upper part of the abdomen scarlet; the two latter margined with blue; some of the lesser wing-coverts marked with yellow and scarlet; under wing-coverts and inner margins of tail-feathers scarlet; base of quills beneath yellow tinged with scarlet, quills above green marked in some places with yellow; abdomen varied with blue, green, scarlet and yellow; under tail-coverts varied with yellow, green and pale scarlet."

In the Catalogue of the Psittaci, or Parrots, in the Collection of the British Museum (p.56), Salvadori described it as: "Green; head purple; forehead and some scattered feathers on the pileum red; a red collar around hind neck; breast red, with purple cross bands; abdomen blue; flanks green and yellow; thighs green; under tail-coverts orange, green in the middle; smaller upper wing-coverts with orange-red irregular spots and edges; under wing-coverts red; inner webs of the quills towards the base orange-red; tail-feathers green, the lateral ones with the inner webs golden red towards the bases; bill orange; feet plumbeous. Total length about 11 inches, wing 6, tail 4.3, bill 0.85, tarsus 0.6."

I am also grateful for the assistance I received from Marie Hitchcock, Assistant Librarian, The Library, Zoological Society of London. - Ed.

BREEDING THE GREY GULL *Larus modestus*

by Jo Gregson

The Grey Gull *Larus modestus* is a medium-sized gull (length 18in (46cm)) approximately the same size as the Common Gull *L. canus* and the Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*. Its range extends along the west coast of South America from Colombia to Chile (maximum range during winter dispersal). It breeds in colonies on the inland deserts of northern Chile and Perú.

It is best described as being of typical gull proportions with the adult having mainly grey plumage with a striking white head (which becomes brownish when the bird is in non-breeding plumage) and the primaries and secondaries being dark, almost black, with the wings having a white trailing edge which remains visible when the wings are closed. Adult plumage is acquired in the third winter. Young birds have overall brownish-grey plumage which, with each moult, becomes greyer on the body and the wings, and the head becomes progressively paler.

A pair of Grey Gulls arrived at Paignton Zoo Environmental Park on March 6th 2001. The pair came from Heidelberg Zoo, Germany, where the male was hatched in 1998 and the female in 1996. Ever since their arrival here they have been housed in the Cottage Aviary, a large planted aviary with a pond and shelter. The aviary measures approximately 12m x 15m x 3m high (roughly 40ft x 50ft x 10ft high) and has a substrate of gravel areas and grass areas as well as a shallow concrete pond. The pair has bred consistently for the past four years and the gulls are being kept as a growing colony.

Other current occupants of the aviary include: Red-billed Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*, Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri*, Chestnut Teal *A. castanea*, White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*, Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* and Palawan Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron emphanum*. The gulls have not interacted badly with any other species and are more likely to be chased off by other birds than to assert themselves. This quiet, almost docile, behaviour is hardly what is expected from a gull but their repeated breeding has demonstrated that they are healthy and contented. The breeding results from 2002-2005 have resulted in one chick being reared in June 2002, two in June 2003, two in June 2004 and one in July 2005.

The nest is a simple scrape in the gravel in which a clutch of two eggs is laid. The nest has always been in roughly the same spot, an open area at the back of the aviary. Unfortunately the site is at the bottom of a small slope



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