



EPIMACHUS SPECIOSUS.

J. Gould & W. Hart, del. et lith.

Walter Lloyd.

EPIMACHUS SPECIOSUS.

Great Promerops.

- Le Grand Promérops de la Nouvelle-Guinée*, Sonn. Voy. N. Guin. p. 163, pl. 101.
Le Promerops brun de la Nouvelle-Guinée, id. tom. cit. p. 164, pl. 100.
Grand Promerops à paremens frisés, Buff. H. N. Ois. vi. p. 472.
Promerops de la Nouvelle-Guinée, Buff. Pl. Enl. vi. pls. 638, 639.
Upupa speciosa, Bodd. Tabl. Pl. Enl. p. 39.
 ——— *striata*, Bodd. tom. cit. p. 39.
New-Guinea Brown Promerops, Lath. Gen. Syn. i. pt. 2, p. 694.
Grand Promerops, Lath. tom. cit. p. 695.
Upupa fusca, Gm. S. N. i. p. 468.
 ——— *magna*, Gm. tom. cit. p. 468.
Le Promérops rayé, Audeb. et Vieill. Ois. Dor. i. pl. 7.
Le Promerops à large parure, Levaill. H. N. Promér. et Guêp. pls. 13, 15.
Promerops striata, Shaw, Gen. Zool. viii. p. 144.
 ——— *superbus*, Shaw, tom. cit. p. 145.
Falcinellus superbus, Vieill. N. Dict. d'Hist. Nat. xxviii. p. 166.
 ——— *magnificus*, Vieill. tom. cit. p. 167.
Epimachus magnus, Cuvier, Règne Anim. i. p. 407.
 ——— *superbus*, Steph. Gen. Zool. xiv. p. 77.—Wagler, Syst. Av. *Epimachus*, sp. 1.—Less. Traité, p. 321, Atlas, pl. 73. fig. 1.—Rosenb. J. f. O. 1864, p. 123.
Cinnamolegus papuensis, Less. Ois. Parad. Syn. p. 32.—Id. H. N. pls. 39, 40.
Epimachus speciosus, Gray, Gen. B. i. p. 94.—Schl. Mus. P.-B. *Coraces*, p. 94.—Elliot, Monogr. Parad. pl. xix.
 ——— *Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. vii. p. 785, ix. p. 190.*—Sharpe, Cat. B. iii. p. 162 (1877).
 ——— *magnus*, Bp. Consp. i. p. 411.—Wall. Ibis, 1861, p. 287.—Id. P. Z. S. 1862, p. 160.—Id. Malay Arch. ii. p. 255.—Schl. J. f. O. 1861, p. 386.—Id. N. T. D. i. p. 332.
 ——— *maximus*, Gray, P. Z. S. 1861, p. 433.—Id. Hand-l. B. i. p. 105.—Beccari, Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. vii. p. 710.—Id. Ibis, 1876, p. 249.

IN spite of the long list of synonyms with which this species has been burdened by naturalists, the actual information respecting its habits is almost wanting; neither can I pretend to give a long account of the bird, simply for the reason that there is nothing to tell. I cannot weary my readers with a dissertation on the various incidents through which this fine Bird of Paradise has reached the very complicated synonymy which has marked its scientific history. Suffice it to say that, owing to our meagre knowledge of the bird in a natural state, the males and the females have generally been taken for separate species; and although imperfect skins have been sent to Europe in some numbers for the last hundred years, we have had to wait until quite recently for the gladdening of our eyes by the receipt of the perfect bird.

It is at once the largest and the most remarkable, if not the most beautiful, of the thin-billed Birds of Paradise, which comprise the Rifle-birds, the Twelve-wired *Seleucides*, and the lately discovered Sickie-billed *Drepanornis*. Only two species of *Epimachus* are known—the subject of the present article, and *E. ellioti*; the latter is still represented by the single type specimen in my collection, the habitat of which, though supposed to be the island of Waigiou, is not yet known for certain.

Mr. Wallace did not meet with the present species during his explorations in Papuaia. He says, "This splendid bird inhabits the mountains of New Guinea, in the same district with the Superb (*Lophorina atra*) and the Six-shafted (*Parotia seapennis*) Paradise-birds, and, I was informed, is sometimes found in the ranges near the coast. I was several times assured by different natives that this bird makes its nest in a hole underground, or under rocks, always choosing a place with two apertures, so that it may enter at one and go out at the other. This is very unlike what we should suppose to be the habits of the bird; but it is not easy to conceive how the story originated if it is not true; and all travellers know that native accounts of the habits of animals, however strange they may seem, almost invariably turn out to be correct."

The following note appears in Dr. Beccari's Ornithological Letter:—

"The *Epimachi* have been separated from the other birds of Paradise; but I think this is paradoxical. The form and the length of the beak of *Epimachus maximus* is most variable; the young males and females

are found with the beak only half the length of that of the adult males and females. This fact made me think at first that I had found the female of *E. ellioti*; but I was mistaken. An *Epimachus* seems to be found at Waigiou, and will probably be *E. ellioti*; but I was not able to return there as I had intended. *Epimachus maximus* and *Astrapia gularis* are only found on the highest and most difficult peaks of Mount Arfak, nearly always above 6000 feet elevation. Specimens in dark plumage are common enough; but those which have attained perfect plumage are rare, perhaps because they take some years to acquire it. Both of them live on the fruits of certain Pandanaceæ, and especially on those of the *Freycinetia*, which are epiphytous on the trunks of trees. The irides of the large *Epimachus* are dark brick-red."

The descriptions are taken from Mr. Bowdler Sharpe's 'Catalogue of Birds.'

Adult male. Above velvety black, with metallic feathers of coppery green on the head, middle of the back, and rump; lores and feathers on the side of the head metallic like the crown; entire under surface of body velvety black, with a purplish brown gloss on the sides of the body; on each side of the breast springs a tuft of sickle-shaped plumes in the shape of a fan, velvety black, tipped with a broad band of steel-blue, before which is a narrow subterminal band of purplish blue; flank-feathers long and drooping, the outer ones broadly tipped with metallic bronzy-green, before which is a double subterminal band of velvety black and purplish blue; wings velvety black, with a gloss of steel-blue; tail-feathers black, all but the three outermost feathers washed with steel-blue, the two centre ones entirely of this colour; bill and legs black.

Total length 26 inches, culmen 2·85, wing 7·2, tail 16·7.

Female. Upper part of head brownish red; rest of upper parts olive-brown, becoming slightly rufous on the rump and upper tail-coverts; secondaries reddish brown, edged with rufous; primaries dark brown, edge of outer web rufous; cheeks, throat, and upper part of breast brownish black; underparts white, narrowly barred with black; tail light brown, with a rufous tinge; bill long and slender, much curved, and, with the feet and tarsi, jet-black.

The figures in the Plate, which represent a male of about two thirds the natural size, and a male and a female very much reduced, are taken from a superb pair of skins in my own collection.



Gould, John and Sharpe, Richard Bowdler. 1878. "Epimachus speciosus, Great Promerops [Pl. 9]." *The birds of New Guinea and the adjacent Papuan islands : including many new species recently discovered in Australia* 1(VII), –.
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