

	millims.
Length of the tail . . . . .	163
Length of the femur . . . . .	19
Length of the tibia . . . . .	20

*Hab.* Ecuador. The two adult specimens on which the above description is founded were obtained from Mr. Buckley, and are in the British-Museum collection.

This species presents a striking similarity in appearance to *Anolis* (*Rhinosaurus*) *nasicus*, the forms and proportions being the same. The points of distinction between them are, however, numerous; the rostral and mental shields are quite different, the latter plate being much shorter on each side in *A. nasicus*, in which also the head-shields show a different arrangement, and the supraorbital semicircles of plates are not in contact on the space between the eye.

#### 10. Field-notes on the Morroop (*Casaurius bennetti*) of New Britain. By WILFRED POWELL.

[Received June 15, 1880.]

The interior of the northern peninsula of New Britain is composed of high tableland and grassy plains of considerable area. It is on these plains that the Cassowary of this island (*Casuaris bennetti*) is mostly to be found. These birds are generally seen moving slowly along in the high grass, with their heads just showing above it. The plains appear to be their feeding-ground, as they are rarely seen in the bush during the daytime. They are gregarious in their habits, travelling in flocks of three or four; I have sometimes seen as many as seven in a flock together. When in motion they always go in Indian file, with the cock bird leading. They do not seem to advance over the ground very quickly unless alarmed, when they travel with marvellous rapidity, having a bounding motion, which is not, in my estimation, very graceful. When they select a place for their nests, they do so usually in an open glade that is well timbered, but without underscrub. Here they scrape the earth together into a slight heap with a depression in the centre. The nest is circular in form, about five feet in diameter, the outside being raised about six inches from the ground-level. Here they lay their eggs, which are left to hatch by the heat of the sun. The natives who search for these nests, in order to obtain the eggs for food (which they consider a great delicacy, though I cannot say I like them myself, their flavour being too strong), assure me that they seldom find more than three at a time in one nest, and that when the bird has laid one egg, it leaves the nest for some days before returning to lay another; whether they lay eggs elsewhere, in the meanwhile, I cannot say. The egg is about five inches long by three inches wide at the broadest part, and is thickly mottled with delicate light green spots.

The Cassowary's food consists of lizards, frogs, fruit, nuts, and



they are also very fond of fish. Whilst in conversation with a native one day, he told me that the Pook-Pook (or Crocodile) was very fond of Cassowary's flesh and often eats them. It puzzled me very much to understand how it was that the alligator, who is so unwieldy in his movements on shore, could possibly catch a bird of such swiftness. It chanced that afterwards I witnessed an interesting occurrence that may very possibly account for it. I was one day some little distance up a river in New Britain, sitting in my little dingey fishing (the boat and myself being partially hidden by bushes); I saw a Morroop (Cassowary) come down to the water's edge and stand for some minutes apparently watching the water carefully; it then stepped into the river where the water was about three feet deep, and partially squatting down, spread its wings out, submerging them, the feathers being spread and ruffled. The bird remained perfectly motionless; I also noticed that the eyes were closed as if asleep. It remained in this position for fully a quarter of an hour, when suddenly closing its wings and straightening its feathers, it stepped out onto the bank, where, shaking itself several times, a number of small fishes fell from under the wings and from amidst the feathers, which were immediately picked up and swallowed. The fishes had evidently mistaken the feathers for a description of weed that grows in the water along the banks of the rivers in this island, and very much resembles the feathers of the Cassowary, and in which the smaller fish hide to avoid the larger ones that prey on them. I think it would have been very easy for an alligator to seize the bird whilst thus in the water. These birds generally go into the thickest scrubs to sleep; and although I have never myself seen them, I hear from the natives that the hen birds sleep with their heads under their wings, lying down, and that the male bird lies with his head stretched out along the ground, probably to guard against surprise.

The method the natives adopt to catch them is to light fires in a large circle of about a mile in circumference in the long grass on the plains, leaving one opening in the circle, at which is stationed several men armed with spears. The fire is made to burn towards the centre of the circle by men and women on the outside, who beat out with bushes all fire likely to spread in any other direction; this drives the Cassowary that are within the circle to the opening, where they are speared by the men stationed there for that purpose. Another method is to place a rope (made of the bark of a tree), with a running-noose at one end and a loop at the other, round the nest, covering it with sand so as to hide it. The native takes the other end (which has been wound round his body) behind a tree, and waits for the bird to come. When she is seated on the nest, in the act of laying an egg, he pulls the rope and the noose catches the legs of the Cassowary; he then runs with the other end to a tree, and takes a round turn, which holds the bird in its struggle to escape until it is quite tired out and helpless: he then dispatches it with his spear. One man, when I was in the Goonuw district (New Britain), met with his death in the following peculiar manner whilst waiting for a Cassowary to come to its nest. Having his rope



already laid, he fell asleep; in the meanwhile the bird came to its nest and laid its egg, but, when going away, got one of its legs entangled in the noose. Thus the man who had the rope wound round his body was dragged along the ground, and, I suppose, struck against a tree, which stunned or killed him. Both the body of the man and the bird were found dead some days afterwards, still fastened together by the rope, at some considerable distance from the nest.

The bones of the Cassowary are used in many ways by the natives, the leg-bones being prized to put on the butt end of spears to balance them; others of the bones are used for spatulas, knives, &c. The feathers are made into head-dresses and brushes for driving flies away. The sharp-pointed claws from the toe are in one part of New Britain used for points of spears, and are fastened on with wax, which when the spear is imbedded in the body melts, so that when the wooden part of the spear is drawn out the horn point remains in the flesh.

These birds become quite domesticated and tame if kept about a house, and will follow like a dog and feed out of the hand. They have a peculiar cry, beginning high and coming down the scale about five notes. The natives have adopted this cry as their war-cry. The young ones make a whistling noise, also when feeding make a chirping something like a chicken, only considerably louder.

The young on leaving the egg is left to shift for itself, and does not join a flock until it attains maturity, which, the natives tell me, takes about five years. The young bird is far from pretty, being covered with a light brown down, which grows darker as the bird ages, until it reaches the rich black of the full-grown bird. The wings are very small in comparison to its size, having no pinion-feathers, but in their place four black spine-quills, which the natives prize to wear through the cartilage of the nose. The horny comb on the head of the male bird is used by him for pushing its way through the thick scrub, which is very dense in some places, being often composed of the prickly palm and a creeping cane which is covered with sharp thorns, and which would, were it not for the comb, tear the head of the bird.

It is a curious fact that there is no Cassowary in New Ireland, it only being distant from New Britain thirty miles, with Duke-of-York Island lying between them, which also has no Cassowary on it. I saw some fossil footprints on a large flat rock near the shore in New Ireland which appeared to me to be those of Cassowary's feet, being those of a large bird with only the three front toes, which, if they should be Cassowary's footprints, tend to show that they must have been there at one time.

The flesh of the Morroop is often eaten by the natives, and the oil that is extracted from the fat is considered very valuable as a remedy for rheumatism. Altogether the Cassowary is an extremely useful bird to the natives in every way, and would form a most interesting study to the naturalist.



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