

February 25, 1862.

Dr. J. E. Gray, V.P., in the Chair.

Mr. Leadbeater exhibited a Hybrid Duck between the Pintail and the Teal (*Anas acuta* and *Querquedula crecca*), and a hybrid between the Common and Silver Pheasants.

Dr. Hamilton exhibited a female example of the Grey Hen (*Tetrao tetrix*), which had partially assumed male plumage.

Dr. Cobbold exhibited and made some remarks upon a specimen of a curiously malformed Trout.

The Secretary read the following extracts from a letter addressed to him by Dr. George Bennett, F.Z.S., dated Sydney, December 20th, 1861:—

“Two ‘Kagus’ (*Rhinochetus jubatus*) arrived from New Caledonia, December 11th, in H. I. M. schooner ‘Gazelle.’ One of them is for myself (from my friend D. N. Joubert, Esq.), the other has been presented by the commander of the schooner, Capt. Hardy, to the aviary in the Botanic Gardens. I intend sending my specimen home by an early vessel, of which I will inform you by the next mail. I intend requesting Mr. Moore, the director of the gardens, to send you also the other specimen; but if he accedes to my request you will have to send some bird in exchange, as, being Government property, that is the only way in which he can dispose of it. Mine, of course, I present to the Society. The birds differ a little in size, which may probably be a sexual distinction. They appear to be young, and run about in a very lively and active manner, elevating their wings alternately, and at the same time raising their crests to their utmost expansion. This more particularly occurs when making an attack upon any of the birds in the same compartment of the aviary. A young Nankin Heron in speckled plumage, and the “Weka,” or New Zealand Rail, are the more immediate objects of attack. At the latter bird the Kagu rushes and pecks, driving it to the further corner of the aviary. The *Dacelo*, or Laughing Jackass, and the *Corcorax leucoptera* also come under its enmity, but not so frequently as the two former birds, as these can readily fly on to the perches out of its reach, for I have not as yet seen the Kagu use its wings for flight.

“The Kagu sleeps with its head under the wing, and also occasionally reposes with the head sunk between the shoulders. It feeds on meat cut small, intestines of fowls, snails, worms, &c. Mr. Joubert fed his bird at New Caledonia on worms collected by the natives for the purpose, and says that it ate nearly a quart in one day. It seems to be an active bird, and although it is said to be very shy in a wild state, becomes very tame soon after it is captured, and appears easily reconciled to captivity.

"We get plenty of Koalas, or Native Monkeys (*Phascolarctos cinereus*). These animals are very tame, and have been fed some time on gum-leaves (their natural food), some on bread and milk, &c., but still they do not survive longer than six weeks at the furthest. They die plump and in excellent condition; so it cannot be starvation that kills them. Not a week passes but I could purchase them of all ages for from 10s. to 15s. each, as they are brought by the coasting vessels from the Patterson and other parts of this colony. I propose, as soon as we have a piece of ground allotted for our Acclimatization Society, to enclose some trees with zinc wire and give them liberty within its range, and see if by such a method we shall be enabled to domesticate them, and find some method of feeding them, so as to send them to Europe.

"We have not yet procured any male Brush-Turkeys, but have sent orders to various parts of the colony, more especially the Clarence River district. We intend to domesticate them, so as to keep up a supply for exchanges. These birds are everywhere becoming scarcer, from the wholesale destruction of them and their eggs by the aborigines, and we find the only sure means of procuring either eggs or birds is by the aid of the blacks.

"Two fine young and healthy specimens of a Hornbill (probably *Buceros ruficollis*) were brought from the Island of Guadalcanar, one of the Solomon group, in the schooner 'Coquette,' as also an elegant Pigeon from the same island, and a species of Gallinule from Tanna (New Hebrides group), called 'Tarbach' by the natives of Sandwich Island (another of the same group), and 'Bush-fowl' by the missionaries at Tanna. They are all alive, and were brought by two Belgian gentlemen (Captain Mechel and M. R. Alain), who have placed them in my charge to be transmitted to you for the Duc de Brabant. I have accepted the offer, as, if they arrive alive, you and Mr. Gould will be able to inspect and, if new, describe them. I intend sending them with the Kagus.

"These birds have been fed principally on yams, potatoes, bread, and bananas, and occasionally a very minute portion of meat. The plumage of the head, neck, and breast is of a light auburn-brown colour, and the rest of the plumage of a beautiful black, except the tail, which is white. The naked portion round the eye is of a light blue colour. The naked portion of the throat and cheeks is white, with a delicate shade of light blue. The eyelids are of a reddish tinge, and eyelashes long. Irides of a light grey colour. The mandibles are horny, of a dirty white colour, but near the base a tinge of dark red colour prevails. The feet and legs are black.

"I intend sending Mr. Gould, by the 'La Hogue,' an egg of a species of *Megapodius*. It measures 3 inches in length and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch in breadth, and is of a light brownish or 'café-au-lait' colour. The eggs are found over all the islands of the New Hebrides group, and are eaten by the natives, as the eggs of the *Leipoa* and *Megapodius* by the aborigines of Australia. The egg in my possession was given to me by Captain McLeod, of the 'Eliza K. Bateson,' who procured it at the Island of Nua Fou, where it is named 'Mallow'.

by the natives. The eggs are deposited by the birds in the sand about the borders of a large lake of brackish water situated in the middle of the island (evidently an extinct crater, as the soil in which the eggs are deposited consists of sulphureous sand), and are hatched by the heat generated in the mound, as in all the *Megapodidæ*. In Nua Fou Island the birds and eggs are, I am informed, under the protection of the king, and can only be procured by his permission. I have seen the same kind of eggs from the New Hebrides group. Captain McLeod has promised, on his return to the island in a few weeks, to procure me some of the birds alive or dead, when I shall be able to send you more accurate accounts."

The following papers were read:—

1. ON A NEW SPECIES OF MALACOPTILA FROM WESTERN ECUADOR. BY P. L. SCLATER, M.A., PHIL.D., F.R.S., SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY.

(Plate VIII.)

A re-examination of my specimens of birds of the family *Bucconidæ* induces me to believe that I have confounded under the name *Malacoptila panamensis* (Lafr.), which I assigned to a series of examples of this genus collected at Esmeraldas by Mr. Fraser, two species. One of them may probably be the true *M. panamensis* of Lafresnaye, though this must remain rather uncertain until the original of Lafresnaye's description shall have been accurately compared with it; the other I propose to call

MALACOPTILA POLIOPIS, sp. nov. (Pl. VIII.)

Cinerascenti-fusca, dorso toto et alarum tectricibus maculis triangularibus albidis distincte notatis; pileo et facie cinereis; fronte loris et plumis mystacalibus pure albis, his cinereo partim mixtis; laterum cervicis plumarum scapis elongate albido lineolatis: subtus alba, pectore toto pallide fulvo; ventre summo et lateribus cinerascenti-brunneo variegatis: rectricibus et remigibus clare nigricanti-brunneis; caudæ, ipsa immaculata, apice pallidiore, fulvescente: rostro plumbeo, mand. inf. in uno specimine ad basin flavida: pedibus fusco-nigris: tectr. subalaribus pallide fulvis.

Long. tota 7·0; alæ 3·5; caudæ 2·8; rostri a rictu 1·4 poll. Angl. et dec.

Hab. in reg. litt. reipublicæ Æquatorialis, Esmeraldas (*Fraser*).

Mr. Fraser procured two examples of this species when at Esmeraldas; and, as they are both marked females, I was induced to believe they might be referable to that sex of *M. panamensis* of which (or of a species which I have referred to this name) he procured several examples. I am now convinced that these two examples cannot be referred to *M. panamensis*, that species being wholly of a rich reddish brown above, and having a deep ferruginous chest and a much larger amount of white on the frontal plumes. This bird is,



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