

REMARKS ON MR. KREFFT'S "NOTES ON THE
FAUNA OF TASMANIA."*

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No one can deny that advantage is to be derived from scientific statistics concerning our natural history, especially from such pamphlets as that presented to the Society by Mr. Krefft, and our cordial thanks are due to that gentleman for his courtesy in so soon forwarding us a copy.

It was not to be expected that, with the limited collection before him, Mr. Krefft could make anything like an exhaustive list of our Fauna, therefore, as the Council of this Society will probably republish Mr. Krefft's notes in the Transactions, the value of those notes may be enhanced by calling attention to those parts to which additions ought to be made, and to some conclusions arrived at by the author which, in my opinion, are likely to prove erroneous.

In Placentalia, Mr. Krefft places first on the list *Canis dingo*, the Dingo, and adds "now extinct." What evidence has the author of its former existence in Tasmania? I never heard of one having been seen in this colony, or of the bones of one ever having been found; of course this is no proof that the Dingo never existed here, but I consider the presence of the *Thylacinus* and *Sarcophilus* (Tiger and Devil) as very strong presumptive evidence that the Dingo never did exist here, even without the negative evidence above mentioned. If the Dingo had been absent in Victoria and New South Wales, my conviction is that the Tiger and Devil would still be keeping down the excessive increase of Kangaroos and other herbivorous marsupials, instead of their bones only being found in the tertiary deposits of those colonies; in other words the Dingo being of a higher type and greater intelligence would, if present here, have rapidly driven out the marsupial carnivora, and we in Tasmania should have had to search our bone caves or other tertiary deposits (as they now have to do in the neighboring colonies) for proof of their former existence.

Referring to No. 8 on the list, *Mus Tasmaniensis* (Kr.), this may be the species common on Mt. Wellington, and which I have regarded as identical with *Mus fuscipes* (the dusky-footed rat) figured in part 3 of Gould's Mammals of Australia. In addition to this species two other small rodents are known, both from Port Davey, the skins of which were brought to

*See Appendix.

me by Mr. Charles Gould. They are distinct from the Mt. Wellington species, and may belong to either the genus *Mus* or *Hapalotis*. Mr. Gould also mentions having seen, at Macquarie Harbour, a third species with unusually large eyes; this will also probably prove to be a new *Hapalotis*.

In the list of Phalangiers, Mr. Krefft has added *Phalangista Vulpina*, thus making separate species of our black and grey Opossums, though Mr. John Gould in his Mammals of Australia points out (as I think correctly) that the grey is only a variety of the black (*P. Fuliginosa*.) The black and grey breed indiscriminately and specimens may be obtained of all shades of colour from one to the other.

The beautiful little flying opossum (*Belideus Sciureus*) must now be added to this list, as it has been long acclimatised on the northern side of the island and is frequently met with.

Amongst the *Dasyure* family I scarcely think the evidence sufficient to warrant the division of the genus *Thylacinus* into two species. In the copy of his pamphlet which Mr. Krefft kindly sent me, and which I have now the honor to lay before the Society, he has included photographs of the skulls of *Thylacinus cynocephalus* and *breviceps* (so-called) but, while I admit that remarkable differences exist in these two specimens, I shall not be at all surprised if a large series of skulls should exhibit degrees of transition from one to the other and thus prove *T. breviceps* to be a variety rather than a species, and in connection with this subject I would remark that abnormal forms are constantly found in the marsupial skeleton.

Years ago I frequently heard of the short-nosed or bull-dog tiger, but could only get very contradictory accounts from the various settlers and shepherds who spoke of them. I have examined over 50 specimens in all, many of them carefully, and though I have found some variation in the shape of the skull, that variation has never been sufficient to divide the species, and, I am bound to say, no such marked difference as that exhibited in Mr. Krefft's specimens ever fell under my notice. To show how little reliance can (in a question of this sort) be placed in the statements of men who are not naturalists, I would call your attention to the two specimens of *Thylacinus Cynocephalus* from our Museum, now before you, a male and female. Some time back, a visitor from the Upper Derwent volunteered the information to our Curator, Mr. Roblin, that the larger specimen was a greyhound tiger, and the smaller (the female) a bull-dog tiger; the head is somewhat shorter and broader in the female specimen, and hence his conclusion. A strong argument against Mr. Krefft's short headed specimen being more than a variety is, I think, to be

found in the fact that no distinct locality has ever been assigned by the settlers or shepherds for the habitat of the so-called bull-dog tigers, and very few, if any, of the same persons attempt to deny that the greyhound and bull-dog tigers mate together. If the one form were found in the dense scrubs of the north coast, and the other amongst the bleak ranges of the Upper Derwent, I could understand that a specific distinction really might exist, but no one pretends that this is the case, both are said to occur in all localities inhabited by the *Thylacinus*, and I would here draw attention to a fact so general that it may be looked upon as a law of nature, viz., that one tract of country is seldom, if ever, inhabited by very closely allied species of *Carnivora*, though varieties mating together may be common, and the reason probably is, that their habits and food being identical, such closely allied species would be perpetually in collision, and the weakest would inevitably be driven to a separate district.

In order to finally settle the question of one or two species, I am now endeavoring to obtain specimens of the so-called bull-dog tigers, and shall be glad of the assistance of Fellows of the Society residing in the country. To the Dasyure family another *Antechinus* (*A. leucopus*) is to be added.

Amongst the birds, to the order Raptores and family Falconidæ must now be added another eagle, killed at Recherche, and just added to the Museum, which does not quite answer to the description of any of those figured in Gould's *Birds of Australia*. It approaches more nearly to the Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*) than to any other, but is evidently distinct.

In Gould's recently published *Handbook to the Birds of Australia* the author has separated the New Holland Goshawk from the genus *Astur*, and placed it in the genus *Leucospiza*. The Grey Goshawk (*Leucospiza Raii*) has never to my knowledge been seen in Tasmania, whereas the White Goshawk, now erected into a new species under the name *Leucospiza Novæ Hollandiæ*, is very common. The latter name should, therefore, be substituted in Mr. Kreff's list for *Astur Novæ Hollandiæ*.

My friend, Mr. Edward Swan, our best authority on Tasmanian ornithology, has pointed out to me an omission in the order Insectores, viz., the white-fronted Ephthianura (*Ephthianura albifrons*). Mr. J. Gould in his handbook says it does not inhabit Tasmania, but Mr. Swan has seen it in several localities during the last three years, and at the present time it abounds at Cornelian Bay.

To the family *Cuculidæ* of the same order the Channel Bill

(*Scythrops Novæ Hollandiæ*) should be added as a specimen is now in the Museum which was recently shot at Clarence Plains.

The sombre Swamp Quail (*Synoicus sordidus*) of which we possess one specimen shot in Tasmania must be added to the order *Rasores*, family *Perdicidæ*.

In the order *Grallatores*, family *Ardeidæ*, the Australian Egret (*Herodias Alba*) and the Nankeen Night Heron (*Nycticorax Caledonicus*) have been omitted, both birds are frequently found in Tasmania. The Land Rail (*Rallus pectoralis*) must also be added as it is constantly met with.

To the family *Anatidæ* of the order *Natatores* must be added the Maned Goose (*Chlamydochen jubata*) many pairs of which made their appearance on the upper part of the Derwent during the summer of 1866 and 1867.

As to fresh water fish, Mr. Krefft has asked me to furnish him with any forms besides those mentioned in his list, with which I am acquainted, and this I shall have great pleasure in doing during the coming summer and will place the list of names obtained from him before the Society.

I know of ten well marked indigenous species in addition to the four mentioned by Mr. Krefft; of these ten two belong to the Genus *Galaxias*, one to the Perches, and two to the Lampreys, but of the affinities of the remainder I am ignorant.

Although Mr. Krefft will not yet give us credit for the Salmon, he may assuredly add to his list the Trout (*Salmo fario*) the Tench (*Tinca Vulgaris*) and the Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*) all of which now abound in various localities.

Of the invertebrates to the class *Insecta* and order *Lepidoptera* a large number of species will have to be added as our moths are numerous, many of the forms being limited to small localities.