

AN ADDITION TO THE AVIFAUNA OF TASMANIA.

Order *Anseres*.Family *Anatidæ*.*Anseranas Melanoleuca* Latham ♀

(The Semipalmated Goose).

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The example of this interesting species that I sent as an addition to the Museum collection is that of a young female, probably a first year bird. It was shot on the Lake River, near Cressy, on the 20th inst., and no doubt formed one of a small flock that have lately been observed in the neighbourhood of Launceston. Another specimen was shot on the outskirts of the town, and at about the same time two others were noticed flying at a great height over Invermay, and still another I hear has been simultaneously seen in the vicinity of the township of Westbury, so that there is little doubt that at least five individuals have made their appearance here. In all probability they have been carried away from their distant native haunts by high wind currents of unusual force. The species belong to a genus peculiar to Australia, containing but a single form whose true home is the eastern portion of the continent, having been recorded from almost every favourable portion, with the exception of the western, the interior, and the extreme north at Cape York. In Victoria and Southern New South Wales it is fast becoming extirpated, and it is now only in the most out-of-the-way and secluded fresh-water lagoons and rivers that it is to be still met with, but in the more northern portion of the latter colony, and in Queensland, it is to be seen in some plenty where a suitable locality exists for its requirements. In the wild and less frequented extreme north of Australia it is very abundant, and forms one of the chief sources of food for the natives. Gould states—(The birds of Australia, Vol. II., p. 352-53) that it “was of the utmost value to Leichardt and his party, during their adventurous journey from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, as shown in numerous parts of his interesting account of the expedition. So dense are the flocks that occur in the northern parts of the country, that the natives are enabled to procure numbers of them by spearing.”

Like many of the order, mature specimens show a peculiar elongated conformation of the trachea, but in the young example that I have had the pleasure of manipulating, this was not so noticeable as in those of older growth recorded by

Gould and other observers. In fully mature specimens, the colouration is more developed, the head, back, wings, tail, and thighs then being of an intense glossy greenish black, the bill a reddish brown, and the protuberance in the fore-part of the head much more conspicuous. The specimen I have obtained shows the colouration of a greyish-black, but the sex may in some way modify the colour. The time of incubation is between September and December, the nest being built in the dense ruddy banks of lagoons, the eggs, of which but very few have been obtained by Oologists, are of a brownish-white colour $3\frac{3}{16}$ inches in length by $2\frac{2}{16}$ in breadth.

It is sincerely to be hoped that the remainder of the little flock will be able to find their way to the more secluded portion of the Lake district beyond the reach of the sportsman's gun, there find a congenial home, sufficient food in the sedgy herbage, and in course of time increase its numbers so that we may be able to add this island to its list of permanent habitats. It is worthy of remark that while the eastern portion of the Australian continent is the native habitat of this species, the home of the "Freckled Duck, *Stictonella nœvosa* Gould), a small flock of which appeared on the Lake River three years ago, in the western and southern portion, so that here we have an admixture of species in our chance visitors.