

GEOPELIA TRANQUILLA, *Gould.*

Peaceful Dove.

Geopelia placida, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part XII. p. 56.

THE interior of the country northward from New South Wales is inhabited by considerable numbers of this pretty little Dove, but it has not yet been met with either in Southern or Western Australia. It was very abundant on the Namoi, particularly on the lower part of that river; and that its range will extend over a large part of the interior, is more than probable.

A bird precisely similar in markings, but of a smaller size, is very abundant at Port Essington, and the two birds may prove to be mere varieties of each other; at the same time, as so great a variation in size rarely if ever occurs in a state of nature, I have for the present considered it to be a distinct species, and assigned to it the name of *Geopelia placida*; it is nearly one-third less than the bird here represented, but as there is not the slightest difference in the markings, it will not be necessary for me to give a figure of it.

The bird found in the neighbourhood of the Lower Namoi was chiefly observed on the ground, feeding on the seeds of the various kinds of plants that grow under the shelter of the thinly-timbered forests bordering the plains. It was frequently seen in flocks, and was equally as tame as the *Geopelia cuneata*.

The Port Essington bird is abundantly and equally distributed over all parts of the peninsula and the neighbouring islands; its favourite haunts being moist meadows or the grassy banks of small streams, and grass-seeds its principal food. It is usually met with in flocks of from twenty to fifty in number, which when disturbed generally fly off to the nearest tree; on alighting they jerk the tail very erect, and utter their slowly-repeated and monotonous double note; at other times they coo very faintly, after the manner of the other members of the family.

It is said to make a slight nest in a hollow among the grass near the ground, and to lay two eggs.

The only observable difference between the sexes is the smaller size of the female.

Face and throat grey; occiput, back and wings ashy brown, each feather with a band of deep velvety black at the extremity; spurious wings and primaries dark brown; under surface of the shoulders chestnut; chest, sides and back of the neck grey, crossed by numerous narrow bands of black; abdomen and flanks vinous; four central tail-feathers ashy brown, the remainder black largely tipped with white; irides light ash-grey; bill and orbits bright greyish blue, becoming much paler before and behind the eye; frontal scales of the tarsi and feet dark greenish grey; remainder of the legs and feet reddish flesh-colour.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.