

# HALCYON PYRRHOPYGIA, *Gould.*

## Red-backed Halcyon.

*Halcyon pyrrhopygia*, Gould, in Proc. of Zool. Soc., September 8, 1840.

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THIS new Halcyon is an inhabitant of the interior, but over what extent of country it may range is not yet known. The only parts where I observed it was the myall-brushes (*Acacia pendula*) of the Lower Namoi, particularly those growing on the edge of the large plain skirting the Nundawar range of Major Sir Thomas Mitchell. It was usually seen sitting very upright on the dead branches of the myall- and gum-trees, sometimes on those growing out on the hot plains, at others on those close by the river-side. I succeeded in obtaining both old and young birds, which, judging from the size of the latter, I should suppose had left their breeding-place about a month before I arrived in the neighbourhood of the Namoi, in December. I also saw in this district the common or Sacred Halcyon, but in far less abundance than between the ranges and the coast. This latter species may be hereafter found to be more exclusively an inhabitant of the country bordering the sea, while the Red-backed Halcyon may be exclusively a denizen of the distant interior. The unusual colouring of the back at once distinguishes it from all the other members of the genus inhabiting Australia, but in its general economy and mode of living it presents no observable difference.

Whether it remains during the whole of the year, or is a migratory bird like the common species, I was not able to learn; for although Mr. Charles Coxen had previously informed me of the existence of such a Halcyon on the Namoi, he could give me no further account of it.

Crown of the head dull green, intermingled with white, giving it a striated appearance: a broad black stripe commences at the base of the bill, passes through the eye, and encircles the back of the head; upper part of the back and scapularies green; remainder of the wings bluish green; lower part of the back, rump, and upper tail-coverts red; tail green, tinged with blue; throat, a broad collar encircling the back of the neck, and all the under surface white; bill black, the base of the lower mandible flesh-white; irides blackish brown; feet dark olive brown.

The figure is of the natural size.