

## Forgotten Feathers.

BIRDS AND THEIR NAMES AND DWELLING-PLACES IN THE "NOVEAU VOYAGE A LA MER DU SUD."—The middle of the eighteenth century is approximately the period in which the collection and scientific classification of plants and animals became one of the chief aims of exploratory voyages. It was intended that it should be one of the aims of the expedition under the command of Marion du Fresne, and Commerson, a botanist, who had participated in the expedition under the leadership of De Bougainville, was expected to accompany that of du Fresne also. But he was unable to do so, and no botanist or zoologist made the voyage. Crozet, however, who was second in command of the *Mascarin*, has left to posterity not a few observations relating to the animals and plants which he saw during the voyage or in the countries which he visited. Although they were made by one who expressly disclaims a scientific knowledge of natural history, they are interesting, and not unimportant because of their early date. The expedition, of which Marion du Fresne was the leader until the time of his death in New Zealand, was undertaken primarily in order to restore to the place of his birth a Tahitian who had accompanied De Bougainville to France, but also, in a secondary degree, in order to ascertain if a continent or islands existed in the southern seas where useful products might be obtained and shipped to Mauritius and the other French colonies in the Indian Ocean. The Tahitian fell sick shortly after the commencement of the voyage, and was put ashore in Madagascar, where he died. Subsequently, near the island which is now known as Prince Edward Island, a collision caused the partial disablement of the *Marquis de Castries*, the search for a continent was abandoned, and it was resolved to visit the countries which had been discovered by Tasman in the century which preceded that of the expedition.

The first entry relating to birds is on the 8th of January, 1772—about twelve days subsequently to the departure of the vessels from the Cape of Good Hope. Terns were then observed, and thereafter until the 13th of the same month Terns and Gulls were seen frequently. The name by which the gulls are called is "Poules Mauves"—female Gulls. These may have been immature birds of both sexes mistaken for adult females. At the latter date the voyagers were in the vicinity of Prince Edward Island and Marion Island, and thenceforward until they left the Crozet Islands behind them they frequently saw birds, which are called "Pingoins" (that is to say, Auks) and "Plongeurs." The former were doubtless Penguins. The "Plongeur" is the Diver (*Colymbus*). Crozet, however, may have regarded Grebes and Divers as members of one family and



as having a name in common, and if so the assertion of Litré that the name "Plongeon" was given to Diving-Petrels is probably correct. On the 24th of January Crozet landed upon an island on which the name Ile de la Prise de Possession was bestowed, and which either is or is in close proximity to the Possession Island of modern charts. The sea birds which were nesting on it continued to sit and to feed their young in his presence. Here were found Penguins, "Plongeurs" (probably Diving-Petrels), Cape Petrels, and Cormorants.

Let us endeavour to elucidate these observations of Crozet by the light of modern research, whilst we remember that their non-scientific character renders only a wide generalization possible. The Terns to which our author alludes were probably of the species *Sterna vittata*, for that bird breeds on St. Paul's and Amsterdam Islands. It has also been observed at the Tristan da Cunha Islands, Gough Island, and Kerguelen Island. The Gulls were probably of the species *Larus dominicanus*, which has been observed at a considerable distance from any continental land. The Penguins which have been observed in the seas adjacent to the Crozet Islands are *Aptenodytes patagonica*, *Pygoscelis papua*, *Catarrhactes chrysocome*, and *C. chrysolophus*. The eggs of the last-named species have been obtained on Crozet Island.\* The Diving-Petrel (*Pelecanoides exsul*) frequents the seas in the vicinity of the Crozet Islands; its eggs are still undescribed. The Cape Petrel (*Daption catensis*) is known to breed at the Tristan da Cunha Islands and at Kerguelen Island; its eggs have been found recently.† A Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax verrucosus*) inhabits Kerguelen Island, but its occurrence on the Crozet Islands is a matter of uncertainty.‡ Finally, a bird was seen which was mistaken for a white Pigeon, and from its presence Crozet naively argued the existence near at hand of a country producing seeds adapted for the sustenance of Pigeons. This bird may have been the Sheath-bill of the Crozet Islands (*Chionarchus crozettensis*).

The duration of Crozet's sojourn in New Zealand was about four months of the autumn and winter of 1772, and the time was spent in the Bay of Islands. Our author presents a goodly array of the names of birds which he saw in that locality, but it would be unprofitable to seek equivalents for his Wheatears and Wagtails, Starlings and Larks, Ousels and Thrushes, as well as for most of the birds which he found in Tasmania—to wit, Ousels, Thrushes, and Turtle-Doves. One exception may be made in respect of black Thrushes with white tufts (*grives noires à huppés blanches*). This description evidently refers to the Tui

\* "Catalogue of the Collection of Birds' Eggs in the British Museum," vol. i., p. 143.

† *The Emu*, vol. v., p. 91.

‡ "Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum," vol. xxvi., p. 394.



(*Prosthemadura novæ-zealandiæ*.)\* Crozet distributes the birds which he saw in New Zealand under the four heads—birds of the forest, of the lagoons, of the open country, and of the sea-coast. In the forests were Wood-Pigeons as large as chickens, of a brilliant blue colour. The description, though scant, is sufficient, for there is only one Pigeon in New Zealand, and no bird which is likely to have been mistaken for a Pigeon. We cannot err therefore in believing *Hemiphaga novæ-zealandiæ* to be the "Pigeon Ramier" of this narrative. Two Parrots were observed—a very large Parrot, in colour black (or dusky), diversified with red and blue, and small Lories, which, it is said, resembled the Lories of the Island of Gola. This comparison in no wise assists one, for the Island of Gola is, it seems to me, absolutely unidentifiable. The Lories were doubtless *Cyanorhamphi*, and possibly of more than one species. The Parrot which one would expect to find in the north of the North Island is the Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*). If this be the bird to which Crozet alludes his description is somewhat imperfect, for blue does not appear in its plumage. The Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) has blue under the wing, but is not found in the North Island. In the open country were the small Passerine birds, to which Crozet gave the names of European birds with which he was familiar. There also was a Quail (*Coturnix novæ-zealandiæ*), which of recent years has become extinct. On the lagoons and their margins Duck and Teal were abundant, and a "Poule Bleue" similar to the Poules Bleues in Madagascar, India, and China. This Poule Bleue is evidently one with the "Poule Sultane"—our Swamp-Hen or Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio*). *Porphyrio melanonotus* is the New Zealand species. It also inhabits Tasmania and Eastern Australia, and is replaced by *P. poliocephalus* in India, *P. edwardsi* in Cochin China (not, apparently, in the Chinese Empire), and *P. porphyrio* in Madagascar. On the sea-coast were Cormorants, Curlew, and Black and White Egrets. The Curlews which migrate to New Zealand for the southern summer are of the species *Numenius cyanops*. They depart in the autumn, with the exception of a few birds which remain through the winter in favoured localities.† Pied Egrets are suggested by the expression *Aigrettes blanches et noires*, but there are no Pied Egrets in New Zealand. It is perhaps to the White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) that Crozet alludes. A black bird of the size of an Oyster-Catcher, with a bright red bill and red feet, also frequented the beaches. It was without doubt the Sooty Oyster-Catcher (*Hæmatopus unicolor*). Among birds which visited coastal waters Crozet names Terns and Gannets. Amongst the Terns

\* Pelicans seen in Tasmania were doubtless of the species *Pelecanus conspicillatus*.

† "Buller's Birds of New Zealand," vol. ii., p. 42



which most frequently appear off the New Zealand coasts are *Sterna frontalis* and *S. nereis*. *Gygis candida*, which appears occasionally, may be the "Goëlette blanche" of Crozet. The Gannet was of the kind called "manche de velours," concerning which we are possessed of the information that it was found in the warm latitudes of the South Atlantic, especially when approaching the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope, and that its body was white and its wings dark in colour. The Masked Gannet (*Sula cyanops*) has a white body and wings of a rich chocolate-brown, which might fitly be described as velvety. It is a bird of the tropical and sub-tropical seas of the world, and has a place in the avifauna of New Zealand. From New Zealand the two vessels, now under the command of Duclesmeur, sailed to Guam, and thence to the Philippine Islands, but as the observations of Crozet regarding birds seen after his departure from New Zealand are of little moment we will follow him no farther.—JAMES R. M'CLYMONT. Sandy Bay, Hobart.

### From Magazines, &c.

BIRD PROTECTION IN U.S.A.—The work of the Audubon Societies steadily progresses in most States, and a very good idea has been adopted by the Legislature of Oklahoma. The new *Education Act* provides that public school teachers are to instruct pupils in humane ideas and kindness to wild life for one half-hour each week. A teacher cannot draw pay unless this provision is carried out.

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ATTACKED BY EAGLES.—Merino, Friday.—A woman named Barker and a little girl about seven years of age were savagely attacked by three large Eaglehawks yesterday in the Laggan Paddock, adjoining their residence. The Eagles had rounded up a lot of crossbred ewes, and to protect these Mrs. Barker went across, taking the child with her. The birds suddenly made a concerted swoop, and at one time nearly succeeded in fastening on the child, notwithstanding the piercing shrieks of the mother, who eventually gathered the child in her arms and beat a hasty retreat to her home.—The Melbourne *Argus*, 18/7/05.

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THE YELLOW-RUMPED FINCH.—The *Avicultural Magazine* for May, 1905, contains a beautiful coloured plate of the rare Finch *Munia flaviprymna*. The accompanying letterpress is by Mr. D. Seth-Smith, F.Z.S., who states that about a dozen living examples have arrived in London of late. Mr. Seth-Smith purchased a pair. The call note of this Finch is described by him as a pretty piping note, exactly like that of its near ally, the Chestnut-breasted Finch. Mr. H. E. Peir, Sydney, last year sent a Yellow-rumped Finch to the



McClymont, James R. 1906. "Birds and their Names and Dwelling-places in the "Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud."." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 5(3), 163–166. <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu905163>.

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