NASITERNA PYGMÆA.

NASITERNA PYGMÆA.

Pygmy Parrot.

- Psittacus (Psittacula) pygmæus*, Quoy & Gaim. Voy. de l'Astrol. Zool. i. (1830) p. 232, pl. 21. fig. 1 (♂ juv.), fig. 2 (♀).
- Nasiterna pygmæa*, Wagler, Monogr. Psitt. p. 631 (1832).—Gray, Gen. B. ii. p. 423 (1846).—Bp. Consp. i. p. 6 (1850).—Id. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 156.—Id. in Naumannia, 1856, Extrah. iv.—Slater, Proc. Linn. Soc. ii. p. 166 (1858).—Gray, P. Z. S. 1858, p. 195.—Id. List Psitt. Brit. Mus. p. 52 (1859).—Id. Cat. B. New Guinea, pp. 43, 60 (1859).—Id. P. Z. S. 1861, p. 437.—Schl. J. f. O. 1861, p. 377.—Rosenb. *op. cit.* 1862, pp. 63, 64, 68.—Wall. P. Z. S. 1862, p. 165, 1864, pp. 281, 293.—Rosenb. Tijdschr. Ned. Ind. xxv. p. 226 (1863).—Id. J. f. O. 1863, p. 226.—Bernst. Tijdschr. Ned. Ind. xxvii. p. 297 (1864).—Id. N. T. D. ii. p. 327 (1865).—Finsch, Neu-Guinea, p. 158 (1865).—Schl. N. T. D. iii. p. 331 (1866, pt.).—Finsch, Papag. i. p. 325 (1867).—Gray, Hand-l. B. ii. p. 168 (1870).—Schl. N. T. D. iv. pp. 5, 7 (1871, pt.).—Id. Mus. P.-B. Psittaci, Revue, p. 71 (1874).—Meyer, Sitz. Isis Dresd. 1875, p. 76.—Rosenb. Reist. naar Geelvinkb. p. 56 (1875).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. vii. p. 985 (1875).—Rowley, P. Z. S. 1875, p. 470.—Id. Orn. Miscell. 1876, p. 154, pl. xix. (♂), pl. xx. (♀).—Finsch, *t. c.* p. 161 (1876).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. x. p. 25 (1877).
- Micropsitta pygmæa*, Less. Compl. Buff. Ois. p. 607, pl., fig. 2 (1838).
- Micropsites pygmæus*, Bourj. Perroq. pl. c. (1837-38).
- Psittacus pygmæus*, S. Müll. Verh. Land- en Volkenk. pp. 22, 107 (1839-44).—Schl. Handl. Dierk. i. p. 480, pl. iii. no. 37 (1858).
- Psittacus (Nasiterna) pygmæus*, Schl. Handl. Dierk. i. p. 185 (1858).
- Psittacula pygmæa*, Schl. Direct. p. 67, cum fig. (1864).—Id. Mus. P.-B. Psittaci, p. 74 (1864).

OF the very singular group of diminutive Parrots the *N. pygmæa* is the oldest known; and a considerable interval of time elapsed before an addition was made by the discovery of the *N. pusio*. The later explorations, however, that have been made in New Guinea and its surrounding satellites have rewarded travellers with at least four or five others, to which Professor Schlegel, Dr. Meyer, Count Salvadori, and others have applied specific appellations. That more still remain hidden in the forests of Papuana is probable. Up to this time (1878) I consider there are seven species only for me to deal with in the present work. These have many characteristics in common:—first, their very diminutive size and disproportionately large bills when contrasted with the body; the structure of their feet and greatly prolonged outer hind toe are peculiarities, as is also the spiny terminations of the four or six central tail-feathers. The group to which the *Nasiternæ* are most nearly allied appears to me to be *Cyclopsitta*, a section of little Parrots inhabiting the same country. Although all the species of *Nasiterna* are remarkable for their tiny size, and a somewhat general resemblance reigns throughout the whole group, yet differences are to be detected. These distinctions may be readily seen by turning to the various Plates representing the species, and be rendered more intelligible than by written explanations.

Count Salvadori, who has in the most liberal manner forwarded me all the information and synonymy of the present group of birds, extracted from his forthcoming work on the ornithology of New Guinea, has also kindly sent me notes on the several species. "This Parrot (*Nasiterna pygmæa*) inhabits New Guinea, Salwatty, Waigiou, Guebeh, Mysol, and Koffiao. In New Guinea it has been found near Dorey, where it was first discovered, as well as in the neighbourhood of Andai, Dorey-Hum, and Mtanata. I have seen specimens from all these localities. The late Mr. G. R. Gray mentions the Louisiade archipelago as one of the habitats; but if a *Nasiterna* really occurs there, it would doubtless be specifically distinct. The same may be said of the island of Jobi, where Von Rosenberg asserts the existence of *N. pygmæa*, though no specimen of a *Nasiterna* from that island is contained in the Leiden Museum.

"I lately examined the two specimens in the latter collection from the Aru Islands, mentioned by Schlegel as differing from those of New Guinea in the ochraceous yellow colour of the pileum. These specimens, which were in rather bad condition, seemed to me to be not different from my *N. keiensis*; and if this proves to be the case, the latter name is not a very appropriate one for the species.

"*Nasiterna pygmæa* seems to be not a very uncommon bird in the countries it inhabits; but, from its small size and green coloration, it is difficult to discover and to obtain. Beccari says that, if one can discover their bowers, it is not hard to catch them. According to him they have the habit of climbing up the trunks of the trees; he says also that the natives often catch them alive inside the hollow trees, where it seems that they nest. I have heard from D'Albertis that he once obtained from a native a living bird, which after some time succeeded in escaping.

"It was likewise reported to Mr. Wallace by his assistant, Mr. Allen, that this Pygmy Parrot nests in hollow trees, and lays eggs like those of the South-American *Psittacula*."

Dr. Meyer has written me a note as follows:—"I got this bird only near the foot of the Arfak Mountains in New Guinea, where, at Andai, I procured specimens in the middle of the day. There this lovely little Parrot was sleeping on the lower branches of the trees, and could be whipped off with a stick. This is also the case with other Parrots which are allied to the *Cacatua* group. I may mention *Cyclopsitta lunulata*, from the Philippine Islands, the individuals of which species sleep in the middle of the hot tropical day in rows, under the shade of the foliage, when one after another can be shot down without the survivors attempting to fly away. It may be imagined how soundly they sleep when the noise of the shot does not disturb them; and it is the same with *Nasiterna*. At other times of the day it is difficult to procure, as it lives in the high trees, where its small size and green plumage form a sufficient protection."

The following description of the species has also been given to me by Count Salvadori:—

"*Adult male*. Green, the underparts lighter; pileum yellowish, faintly tinged with reddish towards the forehead; cheeks brown; middle of the abdomen red; under tail-coverts yellow, the lateral ones tinged with green; two middle tail-feathers blue, the lateral ones black, edged externally with green, the three outer tail-feathers with a yellow spot at the tip of the inner web.

"*Female and young male*. Differs from the adult male in wanting the red colour on the middle of the underparts, which are yellowish green. Total length 3·1 inches, wing 2·3, tail 1·0, culmen 0·4."

The figures are of the size of life.

Gould, John and Sharpe, Richard Bowdler. 1878. "Nasiterna pygmæa, Pygmy Parrot [Pl. 21]." *The birds of New Guinea and the adjacent Papuan islands : including many new species recently discovered in Australia* 5(VI), –.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322865>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/230441>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322865>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/322865>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.