

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW VICTORIAN GOSHAWK,  
*ASTUR MACULOSUS*.

BY A. COLES.

*(Read before Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, 14th June, 1897.)*

MANY of the members of the Club will remember that some two or three years ago I stated that there had been a mistake made when describing our Goshawks in supposing that the two birds (*i.e.*, the one with the spotted front and the other with the barred breast) were identical, differing only in age. This statement was challenged by several members. Since then, assisted by several of our members, I have done what I could to prove my assertions, and have secured 25 specimens. Among them I have found only two of the supposed adult birds, *i.e.*, with the barred breast, the remaining 23 specimens being the supposed younger birds, having long oval spots down the front of the neck and breast.

I find the whole of the markings of these latter birds differ from the Australian Goshawk, *Astur approximans*, as described by Vigors and Horsfield, in every respect, and in no case do I find any indication of a change of plumage taking place, as has been asserted by others. This can be clearly seen by the birds and their feathers which I have for examination this evening. I have also the bones of the two birds, and in them there is ample proof of their specific difference. If you compare the breast-bones of the birds it will be seen that that of the Australian Goshawk is of a much broader built bird than the "Spotted-fronted;" the bones, however, are of the same length, and it seems to me that if this difference be caused by age it should show both in length and breadth, while the keel extends to the end in the former bird, and is shortened in the latter.

I therefore consider the bird worthy of specific distinction, and propose for it the name *Astur maculosus*. The following is a description of a female bird shot at Blackburn in April last:—

*ASTUR MACULOSUS*, Coles, Spotted-fronted Goshawk.

*Female*.—The bird in general shape and size is very similar to the Australian Goshawk, *Astur approximans*, V. and H.—a little less in length, not so stout in the body, nor as broad in the head, and differing altogether in colour and markings. Length from bill to tail,  $19\frac{1}{2}$  inches; length of leg, 9 inches; from knee to toe,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches; width of foot, 4 inches. Width of wings, 3 feet; from shoulder to point of primaries, 12 inches. Tail, 9 inches, containing 12 feathers. The culmen, or upper mandible,  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch broad; genys, or lower mandible,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch by  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick; both black, with yellow dash at the base of the lower extending into the upper. Eyes pale yellow, with large black centres. Forehead white, streaked with dark brown and rufous;



crown dark brown and rufous; nape blackish brown and white; scapulars brown, edged with rufous; upper and lower back brown; rump brown, edged with rufous; upper tail coverts same colour; tail leaden brown, with black bars and white tips; cheeks and ear coverts white, closely marked with brown dashes; throat and chest white, with long oval dark-brown spots; breast and belly white, with brown diagonal bars; vent and under tail coverts same colour, with bars much wider apart; under tail whitish slate, with a slight tinge of rufous, with brown bars; thighs dirty white, with close rufous diagonal bars; legs and feet dirty yellow.

*The Male Bird* is much smaller, measuring 17 inches, but the markings are the same as in the female, though with a little less depth of colour. This species does show some variability in the depth of tint of its colour, some specimens being much darker than others, but the markings are constant throughout.

At last meeting I exhibited the eggs of both birds, which also differ in every respect. These eggs are now in the possession of Mr. G. E. Shepherd, a member of the Club. However, I have a painting of the eggs with me to-night, together with five other eggs of the Spotted-fronted variety, but I have never had or seen more than the one egg of the Australian Goshawk.

Gould, in his work, describes the eggs as follows:—"Eggs, three in number, of a bluish white, smeared over with blotches of a brownish buff, 1 inch 10 lines by 1 inch 5 lines." He also says:—"It might readily be supposed that this bird is very common, and such is in reality the case, for it is one of the most abundant and generally dispersed of the hawks inhabiting New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land." This note can only be accounted for by his confusing the two birds, and is quite in opposition to our experience in Victoria, as it is a difficult matter to obtain here a specimen of the bird he has figured in his book.

A comparison of the eggs I have secured, which were taken at Hopetoun, is as follows:—Australian Goshawk, of a bluish white, with a slight green tinge, with dark reddish-brown spots,  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inches long by  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches full. Eggs of *Astur maculosus* are four in number, of a rounder shape than the Australian Goshawk— $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches long by  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches full, of a dull white, with a slight tint of blue, with one or two crooked fine lines of a reddish brown and a few small spots of the same colour.

In conclusion, it will be seen by the feathers on the black-board that there are fewer bars on every feather of the "Spotted-fronted" than the other variety. The back of the latter bird is of a plain leaden brown, whilst that of the "Spotted-fronted" is of a rich brown, barred all the way down the back, the tail feathers being white at the points, which does not occur in the Australian Goshawk.



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