

Some Erroneous Distribution Records in Parkinson's *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, 1773*

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In the *Literature of Australian Birds* (1954, p. 15), the late Major H. M. Whittell pointed out an anomalous ornithological observation in Queensland attributed to Sydney Parkinson, an artist on Cook's first voyage (1768-71). Parkinson died on the return to England but his journal was edited by his brother, Stansfield Parkinson, and published in 1773 under the title of *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty's Ship The Endeavour*.

On pp. 144-5 of that work is an account of the birds which the expedition met with at Endeavour River, on the present site of Cooktown, Queensland, from June to August, 1770. The observations relevant to this note are the following—

During the time we staid here, we picked up a great many natural curiosities from the reef we struck upon,—On shore we were not less successful.—Of birds we found grey pigeons, with red beaks and reddish brown crests which ate very well;—a small bird, with wattles of a deep orange red; a bird like a Tetrao, having wattles of a fine ultramarine colour, and whose beak and legs were black; a large black and white gull, with a bright yellow beak, on the gibbous part of which was a spot of scarlet; the corners of its mouth, and irides of its eyes, were of a bright scarlet colour; the legs and feet a greenish yellow:—a black and white shag, the iris of whose eyes was of a fine dark green colour, the pupils black; the skin which surrounded the eyes was of a verditer-green colour; the beak a pale grey; on each side of which was a bare yellow spot; the feet were black; a large pigeon, the iris of the eyes of which was of a blood colour, the pupils of them black; their irides of a carmine colour; its legs and feet pale red. The two last were taken in a bay called Tasmano Bay.—Besides these we saw many other curious birds.

Whittell identified the gull as the Pacific Gull, *Gabianus pacificus* (Latham 1801). However, as this is now a strictly southern species in eastern Australia, being rarely found even as far north as Sydney, Whittell suggested that possibly "Stansfield Parkinson, in editing his brother's notes, mixed Botany Bay notes with those made at the *Endeavour*". That there had in fact been some confusion of localities had already been noted independently by one of us who has been working on the Cook material in the British Museum (Natural History) for some years. It was realized that Parkinson's description of the large pigeon from Tasmano (i.e. Tasman's) Bay applied to the New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* (Gm. 1789), which Parkinson had already noted at Queen Charlotte Sound, New Zealand (*op. cit.* p. 115), although it is commonly believed that Crozet dis-

covered this bird when he was at the Bay of Islands in 1772 (Oliver, *New Zealand Birds*, 1926, p. 381).

When the present writers were checking the ornithological observations in Banks's MS. diary of the voyage of the *Endeavour*, it became clear that there was probably even more confusion of localities than had been suspected and the following conclusions were drawn.

The description of the gull to which Major Whittell drew attention does not apply to the Pacific Gull, *Gabianus pacificus*, but to the Southern Black-backed Gull, *Larus dominicanus* Lichtenstein 1823, a common bird in New Zealand waters. Its legs are of the greenish yellow hue noted by Parkinson whereas those of the Pacific Gull are clear yellow.

The shag from 'Tasmano' Bay would be the Pied Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax varius* (Gm. 1789); Banks makes several references to shags in New Zealand waters and in January 1770 mentions shooting a multitude of these birds in Queen Charlotte's Sound, so that Parkinson's bird may have been one of these although this species also occurs generally in Australia.

The "small bird, with wattles of deep orange red" is less likely to have been the Jacana, *Irediparra gallinacea* Temminck 1828, suggested by Whittell, than the New Zealand Saddleback, *Creadion carunculatus* (Gm. 1789). We know from the records of Cook's second voyage that this bird occurred in Queen Charlotte Sound in apparent abundance and it is unlikely to have been overlooked by Parkinson and his companions. Indeed Parkinson seems to have distinctly referred to it in the following note on the Sound (*op. cit.* p. 115)—"The woods abound with divers kinds of birds, such as parrots, wood-pigeons, water-hens; three sorts of birds having wattles——."

The bird like a *Tetrao* was thought by Whittell to have been the Brush Turkey, *Alectura lathamii* Gray 1851. Mathews points out, however, that the wattles of the eastern race of the males of this bird are purplish white and only noticeable in the breeding season (*Birds of Australia*, 1910, p. 61). It is unlikely that Parkinson would have made a mistake in his note on the colour, which he states, as noted above, to have been a fine ultramarine, nor is he likely to have described a cassowary as being "like a *Tetrao*". Captain C. H. B. Grant has suggested that the localities have been even further confused in this case and that the bird in question was perhaps one of the South American guans, *Penelope* sp., which could have been collected when the *Endeavour* was at Rio de Janeiro in 1768.

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