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Col. W. V. Legge

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The Emus of Tasmania and King Island.

BY COL. W. V. LEGGE, C.M.B.O.U., &c., Tasmania.

THE interesting discovery of the bones of an extinct Emu, as also those of marsupials, in King Island,* and likewise the subsequent exploration and further acquisition of osseous remains by Messrs. Morton and Johnston in June last, mark a noteworthy era in biological work in Tasmania, and open up the important question of the former geographical distribution of *Dromæus* in Australia.

Before proceeding to a consideration of this matter, it will be well to glance at the remarkable distribution of the allied form *Casuarius* in Papua. There we find that the range of some of the species of that genus is extremely small, their respective habitats being remarkably local. Such a condition is doubtless to be expected in the case of Struthious birds; but nevertheless the restriction of range in the case of the Cassowary is carried to excess in Dutch New Guinea. In the great Gulf of Geelvink, which forms such a vast re-entering curve on the littoral of north-west Papua, there are no less than 3 species of Cassowary distributed round its extensive coast line, while a fourth, *C. accipitalis*, inhabits the large island of Jobi, lying in the entrance of the Gulf. The distance across the widest part of this large bay is about 200 miles, and the deep curve which it makes in the conformation of the coast forms the curious double peninsula with which geographers are familiar. As we pass round to the west coast of the peninsula we come to the island of Salwatti, lying opposite a small indentation in the littoral of the mainland, and here is another species of the genus, which is also found in the country lying opposite the island, the strait separating it from the latter being small and studded with islets.

Continuing further south, still another Cassowary is located on the littoral, and extends to the Aru Islands, lying 90 miles off the coast, and which also hold another species peculiar to their area. Finally, to conclude with the western Papuasian region, which properly takes in part of the Moluccan group, a seventh species of *Casuarius* inhabits the large island of Ceram, situated about 100 miles from the peninsula of Onin, referred to above.

Thus there are four species of this remarkable bird contained within the 420 miles of longitude between the east side of the Gulf of Geelvink and the island of Salwatti; two comprised in the distance of 80 miles between the south coast and the Aru Islands; and finally the Ceram bird, 100 miles from the Salwatti one.

* *The Emu*, vol. iii., p. 113.

The distribution of the remaining species of Cassowary, including the Australian bird, located at no great distance from its nearest congener in British New Guinea, and the more distant form inhabiting New Britain, need not be dealt with after what has been said regarding the restricted habitat of the Western Papuan *Casuariidæ.*

It is reasonable to assume that in any portion of temperate Australia which can be looked upon as being, or having been in former times, the "focus" of the distribution of members of the allied family *Dromæidæ*, their respective habitats would be as restricted as those of their tropical relatives the Cassowaries.

The Emus have been distributed in recent times from North-West Australia to Tasmania, and the farther south they ranged the more numerous presumably were their species, until we find evidences of four being located in the south of the continent and its islands.

The *Dromæus* of Kangaroo Island, now unfortunately extinct, was only known to inhabit that locality, and the Tasmanian species has been considered to be distinct from the continental *D. novæ-hollandiæ* on account of the size of the egg.

As regards the former, it may be interesting to members of the A.O.U. to hear that during the "forties" the Tasmanian Emu used to inhabit, and bred regularly in, a locality known as Kearney's Bogs. This upland moor was part of the Rockfort estate, owned then by the writer's father-in-law, Major W. Gray, 94th Regiment. It is situated about twelve miles to the south of Avoca, in a portion of the Eastcoast Ranges, which flank the valley of the St. Paul's River. One of the shepherds of the estate, H. Wyburn, was resident at the bogs, and used not infrequently to bring eggs to the house, and about the year 1845 succeeded in capturing two young birds, which were conveyed to Rockfort and reared in the goose-yard. They lived about the homestead for several years, and were tame and mischievous, coming to the open "French" windows of the dining-room to be fed, thrusting their heads into the room at times. Mrs. Legge, who was then a young girl, has vivid recollections of these Emus, and avers that they were large birds very similar to the Emu of the continent. Some years afterwards a pair of Tasmanian Emus, which I am of opinion were also brought from Kearney's Bogs, were kept at the Tullochgorum estate, not far from Avoca, and the appearance of these birds, as they ran along the fence of their enclosure, near the road, is firmly impressed on my recollection as a boy. They were slightly smaller* than the average example of *D. novæ-hollandiæ*, but must, from the accounts given of *D. ater* of Kangaroo Island, have been larger than that bird

* This is shown by the dimensions of the egg in Mr. J. W. Mellor's possession, which, however, is broader (3.5 inches) than some of the Australian Emu's eggs.

and much in excess of the species whose osseous remains have been lately found in King Island.

This locality is separated from Kangaroo Island by 400 miles of ocean, and with the evidence adduced as to the distribution of the Cassowary, the allied struthious form, it is out of the range of all probability that the species inhabiting these two distantly separated islands could have been identical.* In fact, were the two forms alike in size, as might be shown, perhaps, by a comparison of the bones, it does not follow that they should be specifically the same unless it were possible to show that they were the same in external character—plumage, soft parts, &c.

I had the pleasure of examining the interesting series of leg bones now in the Museum, in company with Mr. Morton, in August, and comparing them with several examples of those of the Australian Emu. The series of the latter is small, and the Museum possesses no skeleton of this species, but the great difference in size of the smaller species from King Island is so apparent that one requires but a single example of the larger *D. novæ-hollandiæ* for comparison.

In the table given beneath of the leg bones of the King Island Emu it will be seen how much they vary in dimensions, the smaller-sized being probably those of immature examples of the species. This suggests the thought that by some great catastrophe, such as a tidal wave, a whole colony of these Emus was destroyed while taking shelter on or frequenting a sandy hill or dune, which may in after years have been elevated above its former level.

The following are the measurements referred to relating to the legs, the respective joints of which bear no relation to one another as regards individual examples :—

Dromæus, sp. ?

	Tibia.	Metatarsus.	Femur.
	in.	in.	in.
1	11¾	10¼	6⅝
2	10¾	9	6⅝
3	9½	8½	6⅝
4	8¾	8¼	6¼
5	9	7¼	6
6	8⅜	4¼	5¾
7	10½	9¾	7
8	10½	8⅛	7
9	11	6⅛	6
10	12¼	8½	6¾
11	11¼	9¾	6
12	11⅜	9½	6½
13	10¾	8½	6⅝
14	9¼	9¼	5⅞

*At the time of recently writing on the subject and suggesting the name given below for the King Island Emu, I was not so impressed by the facts adduced regarding the restricted habitat of the Cassowaries in Papua, and thought *D. ater* might have inhabited King Island.

D. novæ-hollandiæ.

	Tibia. in.	Metatarsus. in.	Femur.
1 ...	15	14½ ...	(None
2 ...	15¾	14⅜	available)
3 ...	15	14¼	
4 ...	16½	15	
5 ...	15⅝	14⅜	

In a notice of the subject written for the Royal Society, and read by the secretary at the meeting of 15th August, the writer proposed the name of *Dromæus bassi* for the King Island species, but, as this communication will not appear in print till the publication of the *Journal*, he submits the title now for this note in *The Emu*.

It is most desirable that some search should be instituted for the bones of our Tasmanian species. It affected principally remote hill marshes and upland plains and also open country on littoral of the north and east coasts. In the writer's opinion the best locality to prospect for the remains would be Kearney's Bogs, already mentioned. It can either be approached *viâ* Avoca, to which place one travels by the Fingal railway, or (equally well) by the Lake Leake road from Campbelltown to the great reservoir, some 12 or 15 miles from the township. The courteous proprietor of the Benham estate, Avoca, of which the Bogs are the summer sheep run, would no doubt be pleased to allow members of the Union to search them for traces of the extinct Emu, which, like so many interesting flightless forms of the great class *Aves*, has passed out of existence.

As the writer, during this opening meeting of our annual Congress, has learnt that Professor Baldwin Spencer, C.M.G., has just described the King Island Emu* from bones lent him by our Museum trustees, it is only right to state that this is the first indication conveyed to him of the Professor having worked out the subject. The name, therefore, *suggested* in the *earlier* communication, addressed to the Royal Society, becomes a synonym of the title bestowed on the bird by Professor Spencer.

Description of a New Bird-of-Paradise.

BY D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S., MELBOURNE.

Paradisornis rudolphi hunti, sub-species nova.

THE head, neck, and upper portion of back velvety black, with a greenish-coppery sheen on throat, sides of head and forehead; on back of head cherry-brown sheen; a white line above and below the eye of short white feathers, and a small bare patch

* See *Vict. Naturalist*, vol. xxiii., p. 139.