

ART. XXI.—*Description of a Remarkable Variation in the Colour of Platycercus auriceps.*

By R. I. KINGSLEY.

[Read before the Nelson Philosophical Society, 11th November, 1890.]

THIS beautiful bird, exhibited by Mr. W. Martin, was shot near the reservoir in Brook Street, Nelson, during the month of September.

In general appearance it somewhat resembles the splendid specimen now in the Colonial Museum, Wellington, referred to in Sir Walter Buller's work on the birds of New Zealand (p. 143), as shot in Eve's Valley, Waimea, by Mr. Fabian. But it differs in the following respect: There is very little, if any, indication of the normal colouring—*i.e.*, green—on the quill- and tail-feathers.

The following is a description of the present specimen:—

General plumage beautiful vivid canary-yellow; narrow band of crimson across forehead; on each side of rump the uropygial spot of rich crimson. Quills very pale yellowish-white, slightly mottled with brownish-grey; secondaries yellowish-white; larger wing-coverts very dark brown, with slightly-bluish green reflection; lesser wing-coverts rich canary-yellow, slightly shaded with grey at the tips. Tail-feathers canary-yellow, the quills being white. Bill bluish-white; legs and feet flesh-white.

Length, 10·4in.; tail, 4·3in.; culmen, 0·6in.

Wing-flexure, 6·1in.

ART. XXII.—*On the Occurrence of Danais plexippus and Sphinx convolvuli (?) in Nelson.*

By R. I. KINGSLEY.

[Read before the Nelson Philosophical Society, 11th November, 1890.]

ON October 26th I received from a resident near Bishopdale, Nelson, a fine specimen of *Danaïis plexippus*. It was unknown to me at the time by name, although I had in my possession a damaged specimen of one taken about the year 1879. In the course of the following week I heard of some six or seven others being captured in the vicinity of the town, and since that date several more have been observed.

On referring to Mr. Enys's Catalogue of the Butterflies of New Zealand, I find there a coloured drawing and a reference to it under the name of *Danais archippus*. It appears to have been first recorded as a New Zealand insect by R. W. Fereday in a paper printed in vol. vi. of the Transactions, and named by him *D. berenice*.

In vol. xi. Mr. F. W. Sturm states he saw it in Hawke's Bay in 1840 or 1841, and again in 1861. It would thus appear to occur periodically at intervals of several years.

Mr. G. V. Hudson has two specimens taken in 1879 and two taken in 1881, but from inquiries made I can find no evidence of their having been seen in Nelson since that date until the present time. And it is scarcely probable that so large and prominent an insect could escape observation.

This occasional appearance is a subject which deserves investigation. There may be several surmises by way of explanation, all more or less reasonable, and yet not satisfactory because void of proof. It may be that their usual habitat is "far from the haunts of men" on some of the back ranges or secluded mountain-gullies, from which a succession of strong winds similar to those we have lately experienced has driven them; or, as is the case with some insects in England, the larva may require some four or five years to mature.

Whatever may be the cause, it is well from time to time to notice their presence, in order to assist in unravelling the tangled web of their life-history. There is no description, as far as I am aware, in the Transactions, but I have, through the kindness of Mr. G. V. Hudson, received the following copy of Boisduval's description:—

Danais plexippus, Linn. *Danais archippus*, *D. berenice* (in Transactions), *Anosia plexippus*.

The four wings somewhat sinuate, fulvous above, with a rather brilliant reflection; all the wings entirely margined with deep-black, having in fresh specimens a bluish reflection; nervures same colour. The summit of the primaries has three oblong fulvous spots, preceded by eight or ten smaller white or yellowish-white, extending to the middle of the upper edge, two rows of white spots on the outer borders of all the wings; occasionally the inner row is ferruginous. The fourth nervure of the secondaries has a large black spot or tubercle. The under side presents the same markings as the upper, but the points of the posterior edge are larger and all white. The ground-colour of the secondaries is nankin-yellow, with the nervures slightly bordered with whitish. The emarginations of all the wings white. Body black, with yellowish points on the thorax and breast.

The ♀ has wider nervures, and is destitute of the black tuberculous spot on the secondaries.

Expanse of wings, $4\frac{1}{2}$ in.

I have also to exhibit two fine specimens of a moth which Mr. Hudson identifies as *Sphinx convolvuli*. They were captured in Nelson during the past week. Mr. Meyrick, in vol. xxii. of the Transactions, describes it, and mentions it as being found in Taranaki and Napier, and that the larvæ feed upon the wild convolvuli of the sea-shore.

From a description of the larva, I should say it is identical with the one that I am informed has been seen for several years feeding on the convolvuli in Blind Bay district.

I also have to record the occurrence of the somewhat rare and beautiful moth, *Elvia glaucata*, in Nelson, but, unfortunately, my specimen was destroyed. Mr. Meyrick mentions it as found in Christchurch from December to February, but I captured it early in the month of October.

ART. XXIII.—*On Rats and Mice.*

By TAYLOR WHITE.

[Read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, 11th November, 1890.]

Plate XXII.

OWING to my pastoral occupation I have mostly lived on the outskirts of civilisation, residing in districts formerly little known and sparsely populated. This was eminently favourable for the observation of the indigenous fauna, and of the gradual spread of imported animals. In this paper I will endeavour to set before you my experience on the subject of rats and mice.

Coming to the Province of Canterbury at the commencement of the year 1855, I at once went into what is now known as the Oxford district, and assisted in starting the Warren Station. We had shipped a brace of pointers to use on shooting-excursions after the New Zealand quail; but even in those early days quail were becoming very scarce in that part of the country—possibly owing to burning off the native grasses to cause green feed to spring. Having no game to work the pointers to, they were utilised in hunting minor game—rats, for instance. We would take a spade, and walk out on the plains, which were like a great sea, whose limit was the horizon, or, on the west, the apparently endless ranges of moun-