

The Purple-crowned Pigeon in South-eastern Australia and Tasmania

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The Purple-crowned Pigeon (*Ptilinopus superbus*) appears to be not uncommon in the rain forests of north-eastern Australia from Cape York to central coastal Queensland. Its status farther south is obscure because of the paucity of records. H. J. Frith notes¹ that it is a rare bird in the Richmond River district, north-eastern New South Wales. There is a specimen in the Australian Museum, Sydney, from near Wollomombi, some 30 miles east of Armidale and about 70 miles from the coast. It was collected on August 23, 1916, and its stomach was crammed with 'lilly-pilly' berries (*Eugenia* sp.).²

The record given by E. A. D'Ombra for the Dorrigo district³ is indefinite. He states that "Swainson's Purple-crowned Pigeons were numerous." Possibly he had in mind the Red-crowned Pigeon (*P. swainsonii*) which has been frequently observed in that area, though in the list of birds at the conclusion of his general notes the Purple-crowned Pigeon, with its correct scientific name, is listed.

Known occurrences south of Dorrigo, and extending to southern New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, are so few that they almost certainly refer to stragglers. Such a supposition is supported by the fact that several of the specimens are in immature plumage and were collected well away from rain forest country, the usual habitat of the species in Australia. In New Guinea the Purple-crowned Pigeon has been recorded⁴ from lowland forests, mangroves and second-growth formations.

On May 16, 1953, the partly-decomposed body of a Purple-crowned Pigeon, in immature plumage, was found by Mr. N. H. McIntyre of Epping (an outer suburb of Sydney); it was lying on a path near his home in Eastwood Avenue. This is the first record of the species near Sydney since 1876, in which year two specimens were collected at 'North Shore' by J. Sheedy. Seventy years ago the term 'North Shore' was used in a general sense to denote the area lying north of Sydney Harbour to about as far as the present suburb of Chatswood and thence eastward in the direction of Manly on the coast. From entries in an early register of specimens in the Australian Museum it is known that Sheedy collected birds in such places as Middle Harbour and Manly.

Details of specimens of the Purple-crowned Pigeon from localities south of the Dorrigo district, north-eastern New South Wales, are as follows.

New South Wales

'Belltrees', Scone. Immature female collected December 28, 1918; "Caught in garden by H. L. White and S. W. Jackson" (on label). Specimen no. H.L.W. 562, National Museum, Melbourne.

'North Shore' (Sydney). Two specimens (adult and immature) collected by J. Sheedy in 1876.^{5, 6}

Epping, near Sydney. Immature bird found dead by N. H. McIntyre on May 16, 1953; preserved in spirits at the Australian Museum, Sydney.

Buckley's Crossing (Dalgety), Snowy River, 30 miles south of Cooma, southern New South Wales. Immature male collected by J. A. Thorpe on March 14, 1900.⁵

Victoria

Raglan, near Beaufort. Immature female collected May 4, 1930.⁷ Specimen no. R.A.O.U.32, National Museum, Melbourne.

Tasmania

'Quamby', Hagley, northern Tasmania. Specimen collected in September 1872, by Sir Richard Dry, "... after a heavy northerly gale."⁸

REFERENCES

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2. North, A. J. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.*, vol. 41, pt. 3, December 1916, p. 493.
3. D'Ombra, E. A. 'A Trip to the Northern River-Scrubs of N.S.W.', *The Emu*, vol. 22, October 1922, p. 122.
4. Mayr, Ernst. *List of New Guinea Birds*, 1941, p. 37.
5. North, A. J. *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, vol. 4, 1913, p. 101.
6. Chisholm, A. H. 'Remarkable Strays', *The Emu*, vol. 32, July 1932, p. 64.
7. Ross, J. A. 'A Record of the Purple-crowned Pigeon for Victoria', *The Emu*, vol. 30, July 1930, p. 66.
8. Littler, F. M. *Handbook of the Birds of Tasmania*, 1910, p. 101.

Great-winged Petrel and Grey-headed Albatross.—Two beach-drifted specimens were found by M. Miller and me at Nelson, Victoria—*Pterodroma macroptera* (Smith), on August 14, 1953, and *Diomedea chrysostoma* Forster, on August 7, 1953. The skull and sternum of the former and the skeleton of the latter are in the National Museum. These are probably second records for Victoria. (See Hitchcock, *Emu*, vol. 53, p. 274, 1952, and vol. 53, p. 150, 1953).—S. TEMPLE WATTS, Cheltenham, Vic., 17/10/53.