

when on the wing. On one of the excursions a large brown Owl (*Ninox boobook*) was shot; it was sitting at daybreak in the fork of a large tree, and the native guide espied it at once.

The great prize at Cape York is, however, the Rifle Bird (*Ptilorhis alberti*), one of the Birds of Paradise. It is velvety black, except on the top of the head and breast, where the feathers are brightly iridescent with a golden and green lustre, and in the tail also are two iridescent feathers. The bird lives in the woods, where the trees and undergrowth are twined with creepers, and does not frequent the higher forest trees much, but the tops of the shorter sapling-like growths and masses of creepers binding these together. The call of the bird consists of three loud shrill short whistling notes, the third somewhat louder and shorter than the first two, followed by a similar but much lower pitched note. This is the full call of the bird, sometimes only two notes are uttered before the low note, and sometimes only a single whistle. The call is most striking and peculiar, and, guided by it, one steals gradually through the wood, treading cautiously upon the dead leaves, and trying to creep within shot of the birds. The call is uttered usually only at intervals of several minutes; it is very easily imitated by whistling, and thus a call may often be elicited, and the bird's whereabouts discovered. The bird is extremely shy, and the snapping of a dead twig is sufficient to scare it, so that it requires great patience and perseverance to shoot one. One may often approach within 15 or 20 yards of a Rifle Bird, and stand gazing into the thick tangled mass of creepers overhead, where one knows that the bird is, without being able to get a glimpse of it, until at last it darts out. The bird takes short rapid flights from one part of the bush to another, the rounding of the front of the wings giving it a peculiar appearance when on the wing. The blacks pointed out the red fruit of the Areca Palm as the food of the bird, and abundance of the seeds of this palm were found in the stomachs of birds shot. The male in full plumage is indeed a splendid object; the female and the young birds of both sexes are of a dull brown colour, as is the case with all the Birds of Paradise.

When walking in the woods in search of birds, a slight rustling in the fallen leaves may attract one's attention, upon which the black guide becomes greatly excited. It is a pair of the "Mound Birds" (*Megapodius tumulus*), which are disturbed and are seen running off like barn-door fowls, and when thus luckily hit upon are easily shot. Several "Brush Turkeys" (*Talegalla lathamii*) were shot during the stay at Somerset, and the huge mounds thrown up by them were common objects at the borders of the scrubs, but the season was not far enough advanced for them to have commenced laying eggs (see Pl. XXI.). A brilliant Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*) was common at Cape York, and to be seen seated, as is the wont of Bee-eaters, on some dead branch, and darting thence from time to time after its prey. A little Ground Pigeon (*Geopelia*), not much bigger than a sparrow, was also abundant. A species of Swallow-shrike (*Artamus*