BIRDS OF PARADISE IN THE REGENTS PARK.

The Zoological Society of London, aided by a large annual income, and the modern facilities for locomotion and transport, have succeeded in bringing alive to their garden in the Regent's-park many striking forms of animal life of which a few years ago the existence was barely known, or which had only been previously seen in a state of nature by the most hardy and
the most enterprising of travellers. The Shoebill, or Balioscopus, of which strange bird two examples were procured in 1865, through the exertions of Colonel Shanassa and Mr. Wallace, is an inhabitant of the most remote and distant
geographical localities, having only become first known to science in 1850, and previously to Mr. Petherick's return from the White Nile with the living
birds, having reached Europe only in the shape of a few stuffed specimens. Birds of Paradise, on the other hand, it is true, have been known to exist
almost from the earliest days of the Dutch exploration expedition to the
Dutch East Indies, both in the wild state and in captivity. But, though it is
sure to be heard morning and evening, besides occasionally throughout the
northern peninsula of the mainland of New Guinea, in the autumn of 1858,
young birds of various ages, who seem to be ten times as numerous as the
earth till the moment of their death, swarming themselves, when in want
at the alightest alarm flying swiftly away among the tree-tops. It is a
harmy and wary, and so strong and tenacious of life, that I know no bird of
species is believed to feed entirely on fruit, frequenting the loneliest trees
and the northern coast of Australia. The illustrious Linnaeus commemorated these fantasies of the olden writers.

A "person cannot be long in the interior of Aru," says Mr. Wallace, to
whom science is indebted for all that is really known concerning the habits
of this bird in a state of nature, "without hearing a loud, harsh, often-repeated note, which has given to our residents in the island the
requirement of obtaining Birds of Paradise alive. The Red Bird of Paradise,
found there, is not shot with arrows, but always caught alive by
the natives in snares. These are placed on the trees it frequents, and baited
by shooting them with arrows from huts of boughs conceals amongst the branches of the tree to which it is accustomed. The arrows, which are made by the natives in the shape of a long, sharp, pointed shaft, with the
which the males of this Paradise-bird resort in troops "to exercise, dress,
and display their magnifient plumage." The archer mounts to his hair
before daylight, leaving an attendant crouched at the foot of the tree to secure the
birds as they fall and recover the arrows. The birds commence to assemble
soon after sunrise. When a sufficient number are arrived, the hunter begins to
shoot, and "if skilful, will kill nearly the whole of them in succession, as
each bird seems so intent on his own enjoyment as not to miss his
companions." This is the Aruan style of "sporting for Paradise birds." Hence
are procured the dried plumes, which, passing through the hands of the
Malayan traders into the European market, were formerly in such request to
adorn the head of our "Irish country-women, and, as we are informed, are not coming into fashion again.

In the Aru islands Mr. Wallace also obtained specimens of the King
Bird of Paradise in perfect plumage and excellent condition. This
species is believed to feed entirely on fruit, frequenting the loftiest trees
in the forest, and flying from branch to branch in quest of its food.

During a subsequent visit to the trading-station of Derby, situated in the
northern peninsula of the mainland of New Guinea, in the autumn of 1858,
Mr. Wallace secured a few good specimens of the Lesser Bird of Paradise, and
others of the King bird; but gave a very indifferent account of this spot as a
place for collecting. "You will ask," he says, in a letter written shortly
after this to a correspondent in England, "why I did not hasten to this
island, when I found Derby so bad? The simple answer is, that in the whole
mainland of New Guinea there is no other place where my life would be safe
for a week. It is a horribly wild country. You have no idea of the difficulties
in the way of a single person doing anything in it." It was, however, to
Mr. Wallace's Standard-wing, as the latter bird is called, that the
energy displayed by Mr. Wallace made repeated attempts to keep captured individuals of this Bird
of Paradise alive when he visited this locality, as they were often brought to
him unjrieved by the natives, but all in vain. Though he soon induced them to feed in a cage, they were invariably attacked by convulsions on the second or third
day, fell off their perches, and soon died. Shortly before last Christmas Mr.
Wallace, whose health had suffered from numerous attacks of fever and the
constant hardships to which he had been exposed during an eight years'
residence in these barbarous countries, was travelling in the interior of Sumatra,
having in contemplation a speedy return to England, to visit the world's
exhibition and see civilized life once more. Upon information being brought
to him that two Paradise-birds had been brought alive to Singapore, he re-
solved to hasten his departure, and started for that place without delay. On
arriving at Singapore he found the two Paradise-birds, which had been brought to that entrepot by a native trader, in the hands of a European
merchant, who was well aware of their value, and demanded an exorbitant
price before he would part with them. Relying, however, on the well-
known liberality of the Zoological Society, for which he was acting, Mr.
Wallace did not hesitate to advance the requisite sum for the purchase of
these birds, and left with them for England by the following mail, arriving
in London, with his precious freight in perfect safety, on the ist instant.

The Paradise-birds seem to do well in the spacious room that has been
fitted up for them in the Zoological Society's Gardens. They feed voraciously,
consuming rice, bread, and vegetables, varied with insect food, in the shape
of cockroaches and meal-worms. In the morning they may be seen to
greatest advantage, as they clamber and flit about the branches of the tree
in their roony cages, and elevate their half-grown side-plumes, which, when
fully developed, form such a conspicuous ornament in this bird. They are
believed to be probably in their fourth year, as it requires, according to the
information obtained by Mr. Wallace, three months before this extraordinary
mass of feathers commences to appear. In their native wilds the Paradise-
birds begin to show their ornamental side-plumes in April, arriving at full
perfection in May and June. In the present instance the change of climate
may probably have some effect in retarding their development, but before
the close of the summer we trust that the Paradise-birds may be seen in full
beauty.

In the meantime, should any one wish to gain more perfect knowledge of
the eccentric forms of the feathering in the adult males of this group of birds, they
can be recommended to pay a visit to the bird-gallery in the British Museum.
They will find there, in the large glass cases standing by themselves in the middle of the room, a perfect series of all the different Paradise
birds obtained by Mr. Wallace during his travels in the East. The speci-
mens are beautifully mounted, and exhibit each of the various stages of the
plumage of these birds. Besides the four kinds we have already spoken of there is a fifth, of which Mr. Wallace had the pleasure of being the original
discoverer. Wallace's Standard-wing, as the latter bird is called, was quite
unknown to science until Mr. Wallace found it in the woods of the island of
Batchian in 1858, and it has been appropriately named by Mr. G. R. Gray
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