

The adult birds are dark slate on the upper parts except for a band of rufous brown at the back of the neck. Below they are of a fine rufous brown, barred with white on the belly.

The bird belongs to the genus *Urospizias*¹ (the amended form of *Urospiza*, the name which Kaup applied to this group of Goshawks), which contains some 20 species. They are most numerous in the Austro-Malay region—where the Moluccas and Lombok mark the western limit of the range. Elsewhere species are found in the Marianne Islands, the Fijis, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, and in Australia and Tasmania. There are several of these species to which the Christmas Island bird is closely related, though it differs from them as much as they differ from one another.

The nearest relation appears to be *U. griseigularis* from the Moluccas, from which it differs in adult plumage in possessing the crown of the head not paler than the back, the slate tinge on the upper breast, and the brown bars on the lower part of the belly and lower tail-coverts, sharply defined and edged with slate, not obscure and plain brown. The difference between the young birds is more marked. The Moluccan bird has the back almost uniform, not mottled, the throat with a median and two lateral lines of longitudinal streaks, the breast longitudinally streaked with brown and the belly with distant transverse bars which are uniform brown, not rufous, in the centre.

In the collection of the British Museum are two skins which, by the slaty tinge on the back and the indications of the rufous nape-band, are evidently acquiring the adult plumage. Among the worn longitudinally streaked feathers at the sides of the breast are new close-webbed ones which are white with brown pale-centred bars very like those on the breast of the immature Christmas Island bird. This appears to be an indication that the transverse barring of the underparts, which is found in the young plumage of several members of the group, is a later acquired character which many species never assume. The longitudinal streaking, on the other hand, which occurs widely in this family of birds, must on this view be regarded as the more primitive character. In our bird this stage appears to be passed over altogether.

NINOX NATALIS, sp. nov.

Supra rufo-fulvescens, cervicis lateribus et supracaudalibus sparse pallide maculatis; fronte, loris et mento pallidis; alis fuscis pallidius fasciatis, et fascia albida obliqua; tectricibus secundariis in pogoniis externis albido fasciatis; rectricibus fuscis, fasciis pallidioribus circa decem; subtus alba, rufo-fuscescente fasciata, fasciis interfasciisque æqualibus; subalaribus subrufo-fuscescentibus, obscurius maculatis; metatarso omnino plumis vestito.

Adult male. Crown, nape, back, upper tail-coverts, and lesser upper wing-coverts uniform red tawny brown, with here and there an

¹ Cf. J. H. Gurney, 'List of the Diurnal Birds of Prey,' 1884.

obscure paler spot on the lateral parts of the nape and upper tail-coverts; the hidden bars of the feathers are slaty grey. The fore part of crown and lores clothed with long sparsely barbed white feathers with black shafts, except a narrow line of pale tawny feathers in the middle line, reaching to the base of the bill; ear-coverts duller brown than the nape, with white bases to the barbs; chin-feathers like those of the lores, but pale tawny and with white shafts. Greater secondary coverts same colour as the back, barred chiefly on the outer web with white, the white bars are bounded by darker brown; primary-coverts dark brown, obscurely barred with paler brown; edge of wing pale ochre; primaries dark brown, barred with lighter brown and with paler outer edges; the second to the sixth primaries have one or two interspaces conspicuously paler than the rest—these are so arranged as to form an interrupted line traversing the extended wing from before outwards and backwards. Tail dark brown, barred with ten rufous bands; in the outer feathers the contrast between the colours of bands and interspaces becomes more conspicuous. Throat pale rufous. Breast, belly, and flanks white, barred with scarcely blurred bands of the same tawny brown as the back; the feathers have a narrow shaft-streak of brown; the bars and interspaces are about equal in breadth; vent-feathers long and white. Under tail-coverts like the breast, but paler brown. Legs rufous ochre, mottled with rufous brown; they are clothed with feathers to the end of the metacarpus; toes sparsely covered with pale horn-coloured bristles. Under wing-coverts uniform tawny brown, paler than the back, becoming mottled towards the edge of the wing; the larger coverts are pale brown, changing to white at the tips of the feathers barred with ashy brown. Quills below brown barred with pale brown, the bars obscure towards the tips of the primaries. Cere tumid; the nostrils look forwards and outwards.

Measurements.

	in.
Crown to tip of tail	10 $\frac{7}{10}$
Tail	5
Wing	7
Metatarsus	1 $\frac{6}{10}$
Third digit to base of claw	1 $\frac{1}{10}$

Only one specimen of *Ninox natalis* was obtained.

It is of a fine tawny brown colour on the back, and bars of the same colour alternate with white on the breast. It measures about 11 inches in length. The stomach contained feathers and bones.

A cry up among the woods (*ow-ow-ow*), like the distant barking of a dog, sometimes broke the stillness of the night, as we lay in Flying-Fish Cove. It was probably made by this bird.

This Owl belongs to group C of Mr. Sharpe's arrangement of the genus in the British-Museum Catalogue—a group characterized by the breast being spotted or transversely barred, not longitudinally streaked with brown nor uniform. The group contains 13 species,

which with one exception are confined to the Austro-Malay sub-region and Northern Australia. The exception is *N. superciliaris* (Vieill.) from Madagascar, a species which neither in appearance nor geographical distribution seems to be quite at home among the others.

The Christmas Island bird is closely allied to *N. forbesi*, Sclater, from Timor Laut. It differs from it in the following characters:—

1. The shade of the general brown colour of the plumage is a red tawny brown, as distinguished from the yellower duller colour of that bird.

2. The absence of the dusky shade on the crown.

3. The ground-colour of the upper breast is white, not tawny yellow.

4. The breadth of the bars below is equal to that of the interspace, not half their breadth.

N. hypogramma (Gray), from the Moluccas, is another near though more distant ally, the obvious difference being on the upper surface, which is dull brown, becoming ashy brown on the crown. *N. hantu*, from Bouru, and *N. squamipila* (Bp. Consp), from Ceram, are also allied, but sharply separated by the almost barless bristles on their tarsi, as well as by other characters. *N. variegatus* (Quoy and Gaim.) is the only other species placed in this section of the genus (with crown of head uniform, not spotted). It is readily distinguished by its dull brown colour and spotted back, and by the presence of spots on the forehead.

Of these the first five species form a group which is characterized by similarity of size (10–12 inches in length), the uniform coloration of the crown of the head, and by greater length of the tail. With regard to this last point, if the *length of the tail* is compared with that of the *wing* the figures are as follows:—

	Length of tail. in.	Length of wing. in.	per cent.
<i>Ninox hypogramma</i> ..	5·5	9·0	61·1
<i>N. squamipila</i>	5·3	8·25	60·6
<i>N. hantu</i>	5·8	8·3	69·8
<i>N. forbesi</i>	5·3	7·7	68·8
<i>N. natalis</i>	5·0	7·2	69·7

all over 60%. Whereas among the smaller species with spotted crowns the figures are:—

	Length of tail. in.	Length of wing. in.	per cent.
<i>N. punctulata</i> (Quoy & Gaim.)	3·0	6·8	44·1
<i>N. granti</i> , Sharpe.....	4·1	7·0	58·5
<i>N. jacquinoti</i>	3·8	6·8	55·8

all below 60%. While for *N. variegata*, with its spotted forehead, they are 4·6, 7·9, 58·2. It therefore appears to hold an intermediate position.