

JOHN GOULD'S *BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA* IN THE
ORIGINAL 36 PARTS, WITH NOTES ON THE CANCELLED
PLATES AND TEXT

JOHN GOULD PUBLISHED his imperial folio 7-volume work *The Birds of Australia* (1840-1848) in 36 parts. In England recently we examined an unbound copy in the original 36 parts.

As a result of a careful examination of this set we were able to (1) definitely date the scheduled publication of each of the 36 parts; (2) obtain a list of each species (plate and text) as issued in each separate part; and (3) count the plates and text. In this counting we were surprised to find that 602 plates and text had been issued. In the seven bound volumes 600 plates had previously been accepted as the number published.

At the same time an Australian colleague in Gould research, Allan McEvey of Melbourne, in going over previously recorded Gouldiana notes, recalled for us two references to extra plates. Ripley and Scribner¹ stated that the Yale University Library had a set of *The Birds of Australia* in the original 36 parts and with the two extra plates. They also have a 'Directions to the Binder' sheet, which has the following note appended:

N.B. The Plate and Description of *Euphema splendida* in Part II. and of *Falco hypoleucus* in Part V. are to be cancelled, and the Plate and Description of *Euphema splendida* in Part XXIX. and of *Falco hypoleucus* in Part XXXVI. inserted in lieu thereof.

Whittell² also mentions this 'Directions to the Binder' sheet with the announcement of the two cancelled plates; however, the unbound copy examined by us contained no such sheet.

It has been stated in several sources that Part I of *The Birds of Australia* appeared on 1 December 1840, and future parts were to appear every three months, namely on 1 March, 1 June, 1 September and 1 December. Parts 33, 34, 35 and 36 were all dated 1 December 1848.

The copy examined in England confirmed these dates of the scheduled issue of each part. In Sauer's book on Gould³ additional information is given on more accurate dates of appearance of the parts as gleaned from reviews and correspondence. Assuming that the final four parts did come out in 1848, then Gould completed his monumental work nine months in advance of schedule.

Prior to an examination of this copy there was no definite information available, to our knowledge, on how many species and which species were included in each part. The majority of parts were known from reviews to have 17 species and the final part 36 was known to have only nine plates.⁴

Here are the facts relating to the distribution of plates. Part 4 had only 15 plates. Two of the plates were double-page plates, however. All the other parts had 17 plates, except for the nine plates of part 36. A simple calculation gives us 602 plates as issued by Gould in the original 36 parts, a total which includes the two cancelled plates.

After a more complete examination of this set in parts, Evans provided the following notes concerning the two duplicate plates and texts.

Euphema splendida (Splendid Grass-parrakeet. [Present day name: *Neophema splendida* or Scarlet-chested Parrot.] The first plate appeared in part 2 and the replacement plate appeared in part 29.

Original text: 16 lines. Contains a brief discussion describing the single male bird which came to Gould in 1840.

Replacement text: 24 lines. Extended text giving details of further specimens obtained in Western Australia and South Australia. Fuller detail of the plumage was aided by the possession of a hen bird.

Art work: First plate has the single cock bird on an elegant spray of *Beaufortia decussata*, based on the 1840 specimen, and prepared by Elizabeth Gould. The replacement plate has two cock birds and a single hen upon the same plant. This plate by H.C. Richter is most attractive, although the artist with extra birds had an easier commission to construct a pleasing illustration.

Falco hypoleucus (White-breasted Falcon). [Present day name: *Falco hypoleucos* or Grey Falcon.] The first plate of this species appeared in part 5 and the replacement plate appeared in part 36. The replacement plate and text are labelled as Grey Falcon.

Original text: 18 lines. Based on Gilbert's bird given to him by Mr. Burgess. Brief description only, with Gould noting the relationship with European Jerfalcon.

Replacement text: 24 lines. Extended with extra birds obtained, especially useful with the securing of young birds. We suspect that Gould was slightly confused with this species.

Art work: First plate. Most handsome plate by Elizabeth Gould, with life-size bird on branch. The replacement plate is disappointing. Richter has placed two birds upon some rocks beneath a stony scree, with green woods behind and higher up the slope. The scene is somewhat dismal, and the birds look rather unwell. One seems to be almost incubating, yet at a most unsuitable nest site. Birds are life-size.

The replacement plate is quite different from Elizabeth Gould's handsome portrayal published in part 5. Richter almost appears to be illustrating another species. The first plate had the almost 'Learian' falcon-look which appeared so successfully in the birds of prey series within *Birds of Europe*. Possibly John Gould was unsure of the validity of this species, naming it for science based on the young hen bird he first received. Then he changed the common name and issued a revised plate in due course, when he had further specimens.

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NOTES

1. Ripley, S.D. and Scribner, L.L. 1961. *Ornithological books in the Yale University Library*. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press.
2. Whittell, H.M. 1954. *The literature of Australian birds*. Perth, Paterson Brokensha.
3. Sauer, G.C. 1982. *John Gould the bird man*. Melbourne: Lansdowne, pp.41-45.
4. Mr. Evans has made a list of the species appearing on the cover of each part. Upon application to either one of us we will provide a copy of this list.

**A NOTE ON EARLY AND LATE STATES OF PLATES
AND TEXT PAGES FOR JOHN GOULD'S
*THE BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA***

AS DR SAUER AND MR EVANS have shown above, two of the plates and text leaves for John Gould's *The Birds of Australia* 1840-48 (7 vols) were cancelled and replaced by redrawn plates and leaves with expanded texts. The earlier and later plates and text leaves, in the instance described, were found in an unbound set of the original 36 parts. From the 'Directions to the Binder', quoted by Dr Sauer and Mr Evans, it is clear that Gould intended that the finished work should contain only the later plate and text leaf in each instance.

If all owners of the original parts had given Gould's instructions to their binders and seen them followed, the presence of extra plates and leaves would have been confined to the unbound original parts and not otherwise known. On the other hand, if and when the differing plates and texts were incorporated in a set of *bound* volumes, as discussed below, they might then legitimately be considered, theoretically at least, as constituting earlier and later 'states', as well as 'cancellantia' and 'cancellanda', that could, again theoretically, occur in different combinations.

That not all owners followed Gould's instructions is evidenced by a bound set of *The Birds of Australia* containing both early and late 'states' (cancellans and cancellandum) of each plate and text leaf, which was drawn to my attention in 1980 by the owner, Sir Giles Loder, Bart. (See illustrations, shown here with grateful acknowledgement to the owner, in which the edge of the board of the bound volume can be seen beyond the plate).

While a bound set of *The Birds of Australia* containing only the later state (cancellans) of each plate and text leaf is, undoubtedly, bibliographically perfect and complete and represents the author's/publisher's intention, the possibility that there are other bound sets containing other than the intended plates and texts is obviously an interesting bibliographical point. Further, one does not need to be very mathematically minded to realize that eight items (Falcon: 2 plates, 2

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