

**Article VI.—DESCRIPTION OF A NEW GALLINULE,
FROM GOUGH ISLAND.**

By J. A. ALLEN.

Gough Island is situated in lat. $40^{\circ} 19' S.$, long. $9^{\circ} 44' W.$, about 200 miles southwest of the Cape of Good Hope, and about the same distance east of Tristan d'Acunha, respectively the nearest land to Gough Island. It is a mere volcanic islet, about seven miles long by three to four wide, and rises to a height of 4380 feet. Little seems to be known of its natural history.

The species here described is based on three skins, in fair condition, collected by Mr. George Comer, after whom the species is named. The specimens were sent to me, with other South Sea birds, for identification, by Mr. G. E. Verrill, of New Haven, Conn., through whose courtesy I am permitted to publish the following description :

***Porphyriornis comeri*, gen. et. sp. nov.**

Similar in size and general structure to *Gallinula nesiotis* Scl., from Tristan d'Acunha, but differing from it in coloration, especially through the greatly reduced amount of white on the edge of the wings and on the flanks.

Head and neck dull black ; back brownish black, with, in some of the specimens, a faint tinge of olive ; wings similar, but less brown, with barely a trace of white on the inner surface of the carpus and on the edge of the wing at the base of the first primary, the outer vane of which is minutely edged with whitish ; lower surface of the body slaty black ; three of the flank feathers on each side with a narrow shaft-streak of white near the tip ; lower tail-coverts white ; crissum black. Frontal shield and basal half of bill scarlet ; apical third of bill bright yellow. Legs and feet yellow, varied with reddish ; lower third of tibia deep red. A well-developed light-colored spine at the bend of the wing.

Bill, from rictus, 1.10 to 1.25 ; depth of nostril, .50 ; width at nostril, .30 ; wing, 5.40 to 5.80 ; tail, 2.60 ; tarsus, 1.85 to 2.10 ; middle toe, 2.72 to 2.88.

Type, No. 56,701, Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., Gough Island, collected by Mr. George Comer. (Received in exchange from Mr. G. E. Verrill.)

In measurements this species agrees with *G. nesiotis*, except in the length of the tail, which is 2.60 in each of the three specimens instead of 3.30, as given by Sclater for *G. nesiotis*. The general coloration appears to be much darker, and the white on

the carpus and edge of the wing is nearly obsolete, as are the white flank stripes, which, in *G. nesiotis*, Mr. Sclater says, are nearly as in *G. chloropus*. (See P. Z. S., 1861, p. 261, pl. xxx.) It agrees with *G. nesiotis* in its stout, thick bill and tarsi, short wings and inability to fly.

Mr. Comer, in his MS. notes, calls these birds "Mountain Cocks," and says: "They cannot fly and only use their wings to help them in running.... They are quite plentiful and can be caught by hand. Could not get on a table three feet high. The bushes grow on the island up to about 2000 feet, and these birds are found as far up as the bushes grow.... Tip of bill bright yellow, scarlet between the eyes. Legs and feet yellow, with reddish spots."

Mr. Verrill informs me that Mr. Comer obtained four skins of this species, which came in bad condition, having been merely preserved with salt. Mr. Comer was second mate of the sailing schooner 'Francis Adams.' When the party left Gough Island they took with them six live birds of this species, four of which died, in consequence of getting wet with salt water, soon after being taken on board the schooner; the other two reached this country alive, and after their arrival improved in health and flesh. They were kept tethered by a rope-yarn tied to the leg, and eventually both escaped.

A further account of the habits of this species will be published by Mr. Verrill, based on Mr. Comer's notes, in a general paper on Mr. Comer's collection of South Sea birds.

These two flightless, insular species of Gallinules seem well entitled to separate generic recognition. They combine the coloration of *Gallinula* with the short, thick bill and oval nostrils of *Ionornis*, and the stout feet of *Porphyrio*, with the added distinction of a greatly reduced wing, and the resulting inability to fly. I propose for this group the generic name **Porphyriornis**, with *P. comeri* as the type, to which may be referred *P. nesiotis* (*Gallinula nesiotis* Scl.).