

THE MYSTERIOUS CARPOPHAGA VANDEPOLLI BÜTTIKOFER

by

G. C. A. JUNGE

In 1896 Büttikofer (*Notes from the Leyden Museum*, vol. 18) published upon a collection of birds from Nias, collected there by Kannegieter. In this paper he described a new species, *Carpophaga vandepolli* (p. 190). This bird is closely allied to *Carpophaga consobrina* (now called *Ducula aenea consobrina* Salvad.), but is different "by a large pinkish brown patch on the occiput and the conspicuously wine-red color of the breast". In *D. a. consobrina* these parts are a splendid grey colour, sometimes more or less washed with a vinaceous tinge. In discussing this new species Büttikofer said: "It is not without hesitation that I describe this bird as new, the idea being rather perplexing that two so closely allied species should inhabit so small an island as Nias".

This bird has always been a mystery to the ornithologists, for it is so nearly related to *D. a. consobrina* and, moreover, it has never been found again.

Examining the skin of the type specimen of *C. vandepolli* I found uncontestable arguments that Büttikofer's bird must be *D. a. consobrina*. The shape of the nostrils, the feathering of the tarsus, the dark-maroon colour of the undertailcoverts, the dark bronze-maroon tone on the upper-parts, all indicate that it belongs to *D. aenea* and is not a geographical race of *Ducula rosacea*. Then, probably by a printer's error, the wingmeasurement given by Büttikofer is deceiving, instead of 223, I found 236, a measurement agreeing very well with those of other females of *D. a. consobrina*, which are ranging from 228 to 241. Tail 132, culmen 21, tarsus 33. The only difference with *consobrina* that I could point out, is the darker grey of the nape, sides of head and throat and the dark rosy tinge on lower breast and abdomen, which also occurs as dark rosy-grey in the nape. Now one may see at a glance, that the skin of the dove under discussion is an exceedingly fat one, which causes the darker grey on the head. Some of

our specimens of *consobrina* are showing the same dark grey colour in places where the skin is fat. Remains the dark rosy tinge of the breast, abdomen and nape. I am certain that this tinge is partly caused by the fatness of the skin, for when rubbing some pure-grey breastfeathers of *consobrina* with fat I obtained the same dark rosy tone of *vandepolli*. So, in all probability, in trying to clean the skin from fat, the dark rosy tinge arose. Some of our specimens of *consobrina* are rosy-tinged in the middle of the breast and abdomen where the incision for skinning is made, places which are largely exposed to fat, blood and rude treatment. The difference between the grey and the rosy-tinged feathers is, that in the latter the rhachis and rami of the feathers, which are a pale-red become much more obvious.
