

On one of my excursions I shot a large brown Owl (*Ninox boobook*), which was sitting at daybreak in the fork of a large tree, and which my native guide espied at once, though I had passed it. The great prize at Cape York is, however, the Rifle-bird (*Ptilorhis Alberti*), one of the Birds of Paradise. It is of a velvety black, except on the top of the head and breast, where the feathers are brightly iridescent with a golden and green lustre. In the tail also are two iridescent feathers. The bird lives in the woods, where the trees and undergrowth are twined with creepers. It does not frequent the higher forest trees much, but the tops of the shorter sapling-like growths and masses of creepers binding these together.

The call of the bird consists of three loud, shrill short whistling notes, followed by a similar but much lower pitched note. The third of the first three whistles is somewhat louder and shorter than the two preceding. This is the full call; sometimes only two notes are uttered before the low note, and sometimes only a single whistle.

The call is most striking and peculiar, and guided by it, one steals gradually through the wood, treading cautiously upon the dead leaves, and tries to creep within shot. The call is uttered usually only at intervals of several minutes; it is very easily imitated by whistling, and thus a call may often be elicited, and the bird's whereabouts discovered.

The bird is extremely shy; the snapping of a dead twig is sufficient to scare it, and it requires great patience and perseverance to shoot one. It several times happened to me that I got within fifteen or twenty yards of a Rifle-bird, and stood gazing into the thick tangled mass of creepers overhead, where I knew that the bird was, without being able to get a glimpse of it, until at last it darted out without my catching sight of it.

The bird takes short rapid flights from one part of the bush to another, the rounding of the front of the wings giving it a peculiar appearance when on the wing. The Blacks pointed out the red fruit of the Areca palm as its food, and I found abundance of the seeds of this palm in the stomach of the one bird which I shot, which was hopping about up and down amongst a thick piece of bush, much in the manner of a wren or warbler. The male in full plumage is indeed a splendid object; the female and the young birds of both sexes are of a dull brown colour, as is the case with all the Birds of Paradise.

When walking in the woods in search of birds, a slight rustling in the fallen leaves attracts one's attention, and the Black guide becomes greatly excited. It is a pair of the "Mound-birds" (*Megapodus tumulus*), which are disturbed and are seen running off like barn-door fowls, and when thus luckily