

HORDERN HOUSE

RARE BOOKS · MANUSCRIPTS · PAINTINGS



JOHN GOULD AND JOHN GILBERT

COLLECTING AUSTRALIAN KANGAROOS AND OTHER MAMMALS

“SURROUNDED BY OBJECTS AS STRANGE AS IF I HAD BEEN TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER PLANET”

GOULD, John.

A Monograph of the Macropodidæ, or Family of Kangaroos

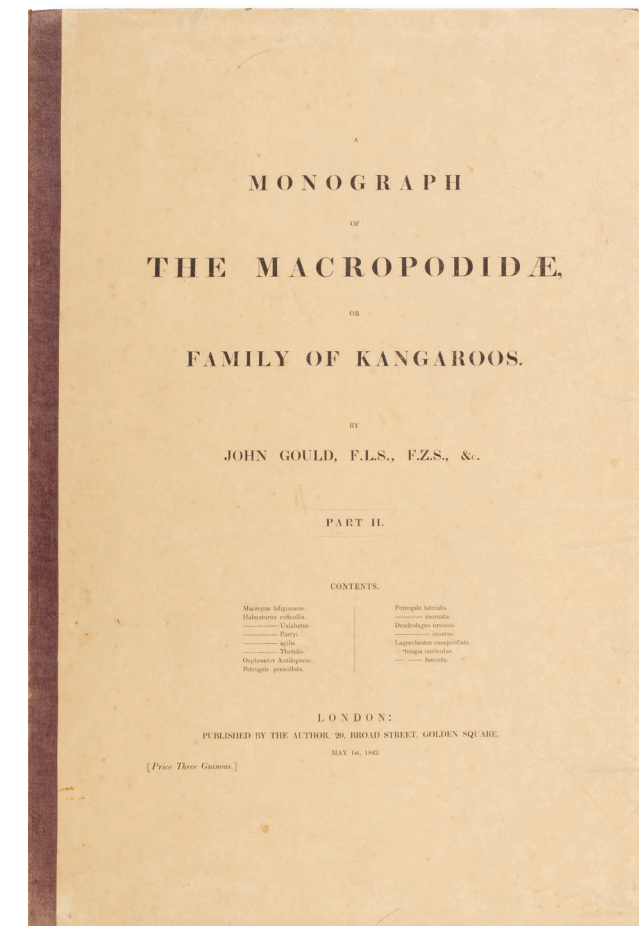
Two parts, imperial folio, with 30 hand-coloured lithographed plates; an excellent set in the original printed boards. London, Published by the Author, 1841-1842.

The first edition, all published, complete as issued in the original printed boards, and extremely rare. Like Gould's other monumental books on Australian natural history the *Macropodidæ* was issued by subscription. The Prospectus lists just eighty-four names, which must account for the book's rarity on the market today.

Nissen, ZBI 1662; Sauer, 11.

\$68,000

for details 





SPLENDID SET IN THE HANDSOME ORIGINAL GOULD BINDING

GOULD, John.

The Mammals of Australia.

Three volumes, imperial folio, with 182 finely hand-coloured lithographed plates finished with gum arabic; with only very little of the usual foxing; uniform original full green morocco binding, spines richly gilt, all edges gilt; a beautiful set. London, Published by the Author; Printed by Taylor and Francis, Red Line Court, Fleet Street, 1863.

One of the most appealing of all Australian illustrated books. The 182 glorious hand-coloured plates designed by John Gould and his wife Elizabeth and mainly executed by Henry C. Richter are widely considered the most beautiful illustrations of mammals ever produced. Complete sets of this glorious as well as scientifically valuable publication are rare, as many have been broken up for the plates.

Casey Wood, 365; Ferguson, 10032; Nissen ZBI, 1661; Sauer, 14.

\$145,000

for details 





In October 1836 Charles Darwin arrived back from five years on the *Beagle* during which time he had amassed a splendid natural history collection. The following year, anxious for his finds to be protected and studied, Darwin presented his collection of 450 birds and eighty mammals to the Museum of the Zoological Society, the work-place of John Gould. Darwin had visited Australia and Van Diemen's Land and made observations on the birds, miniature kangaroos and platypus, all of which would have been of keen interest to Gould, who had already begun work on a synopsis of Australian birds and was tentatively planning his own expedition to Australia. Nothing could have been better calculated to pique Gould's interest and encourage him to forge ahead with plans for his own expedition, and over the next few months Gould began planning in earnest, ultimately leaving London in May 1837.

One of the driving forces behind this expedition was Gould's canny awareness that despite fifty years of European settlement, published accounts of the zoology of Australia were still rare, in no small part because of the vast size of the continent and the economic and geographical considerations that had to be taken into account when mounting such an expedition.

Gould was able, in this sense, to ride the crest of a deepening interest in natural history, at a time when botanic gardens were being established in both Sydney and Hobart Town and there was a greater than ever push for major studies. It was, it should be reiterated, a brave undertaking to visit Australia himself to collect the specimens needed, not least because he and his party would be away for over two years.

For a start, he had to resign from his position with the Zoological Society of London and leave his faithful secretary, Edwin Charles Prince, in charge of the taxidermy and publishing business. Gould also bore the entire cost of the expedition which were not insignificant, and there was besides the personal risk of travelling together with his wife Elizabeth and their eldest son John, then aged seven-and-a-half (the three youngest children, including the sickly youngest Louisa, were left in the care of Elizabeth's mother Mrs. Elizabeth Coxen). By all accounts the Goulds were a devoted couple, and while a husband and wife travelling together to remote areas - rather than emigrating - was unusual at the time. Elizabeth's considerable artistic talents and a reunion with her two brothers who had settled in NSW would have had some bearing on her decision to go.

Gould was joined by one other significant expedition member, John Gilbert (1810-1845). Gould was aware that in order to acquire enough specimens and information to make the expedition worthwhile he would need to take a scientific assistant and zoological collector,



and therefore appointed Gilbert, a taxidermist who had worked under him at the Zoological Society of London, to the position.

Once arriving in Van Diemen's Land Gould and Gilbert initially worked together collecting birds, but they both quickly realised that there was a terrific opportunity to collect mammals at the same time: while out collecting birds both men would have seen enough to whet their appetite for a more extended knowledge of Australia's animals. As Gould himself described it in the Preface to the first volume of the Mammals: 'Tired by a long and laborious day's walk under a burning sun, I frequently encamped for the night by the side of a river, a natural pond, or a water-hole, and before retiring to rest not unfrequently stretched my weary

body on the river's bank; whilst thus reposing, the surface of the water was often disturbed by the little concentric circles formed by the Ornithorhynchus (Platypus), or perhaps an Echidna (short-beaked Echidna, *Tachyglossus aculeatus*) came trotting up towards me. With such scenes as these continually around me, it is surprising that I should have entertained the idea of collecting examples of the indigenous Mammals of a country whose ornithological productions I had gone out expressly to investigate?'

Gould decided they needed to collect in different areas in order to maximise their reach. Gilbert was sent by ship to Western Australia, and while ornithology remained a primary concern, Gould now instructed him to direct his attention to mammalia as well: 'one or two of every species of which, even the most common (particularly Kangaroos) will be desirable', he noted (Datta, John Gould in Australia, p. 115). Although Gilbert had originally intended to be in the west for only four months, it would be almost a year before he returned to Tasmania.

With Gilbert away at the Swan River settlement, Gould continued collecting in Van Diemen's Land, and while only a few new species of mammal were added, a great deal of much needed information on the habits of mammals in the colony was gathered. In February 1839 Gould and a servant left Hobart for Sydney, leaving the pregnant Elizabeth behind in the care of Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin.

In Sydney Gould had a busy few months as the guest of James MacArthur of Camden, Charles Throsby at Throsby Park and then his brother-in-law Stephen Coxen, who lived at Yarrundi, in the Hunter district. An impressive seventy quadrupeds were collected in this his first visit to New South Wales before he returned to Van Diemen's Land in May for the birth of his son, whom they named Franklin after their hosts.



Once Gould was satisfied that Elizabeth and the baby would be properly cared for he headed off again, this time for South Australia, and while he was only there for six weeks he acquired a further forty quadrupeds and made a brief visit to Kangaroo Island where he observed 'herds of wallaby kangaroos.'

Returning to Van Diemen's Land to collect Elizabeth, Gould headed once again for New South Wales. He made his brother-in-law Stephen Coxen's property at Yarrundi his base and for four months travelled extensively in the interior. His small group camped on the rivers Mokai and Peel and called in on his other brother-in-law Charles Coxen, who had an estate in Peel County. On the Liverpool Plains Gould discovered several new species of Kangaroo, describing them as being of such large size they would be capable of withstanding the assault of the strongest dogs (Datta, John Gould in Australia, p. 131).

The Goulds left Yarrundi in January 1840 and set sail for England from Sydney on 9 April 1840. Gilbert arrived back in Sydney from Western Australia later that month and was disappointed at having missed the Goulds. Not really sure what to do next, he decided to head to Pott Essington to continue the work before returning to England towards the end of 1841.

Gilbert proved to be a rugged and intrepid explorer as he decided to return to Australia only five months after arriving in England. He reached Western Australia again in July 1842, staying there until December 1843 when he went on to Sydney. During this second period of seventeen months he collected a staggering amount of material, including 318 specimens of mammals, all enhanced by his informative field-notes often gained in harsh and tiring conditions. Back in eastern Australia he spent time on the Darling Downs before joining Leichhardt in September of 1844 on the overland expedition to Port Essington. In June 1845 Gilbert's life tragically ended when he was killed by an Aborigine's spear near the Gulf of Carpentaria; the local Aborigines had attacked the expedition's camp in retaliation for several of their women being assaulted by two members from Leichhardt's party.

Gilbert was one of the most accomplished naturalist-explorers in Australian History. In his two visits he spent seven years in Australia, went to every Australian state and sent Gould thousands of specimens. By all accounts Gilbert was very taken with Australia and the bush as Gould easily persuaded him to return for his second visit. Gilbert wrote that in the period he was back in England, he was 'dreaming every night of Kangaroos and Native Pheasants.' Gilbert's contribution was enormous and certainly added to Gould's success; in recognition Gould named a species of rat kangaroo after him, the Gilbert's rat-kangaroo (*Potorous gilberti*), the species appears initially in the Macropodidae and then a larger (life size) depiction in the Mammals of Australia. In the accompanying letterpress Gould writes





'In dedicating it to Mr Gilbert, who proceeded with me to Australia to assist in the objects of my expedition, and who is still prosecuting his researches on the northern portion of that continent, I embrace with pleasure the opportunity thus afforded me of expressing my sense of the great zeal and assiduity he has displayed in the objects of his mission; and as science is indebted to Mr Gilbert for the knowledge of this and several other interesting discoveries, I trust that, however objectionable it may be to name species after individuals, in this instance it will not be deemed inappropriate.'

There are 330 species of Australian mammal recognised today (Walton Zoological Catalogue of Australia 1988). Prior to 1838 seventy-two indigenous species had been identified, excluding marine and those not confined to the Australian continent. Due to Gould's and Gilbert's efforts forty-five new mammalian species were identified. In the Preface to Mammals Gould describes the pride he felt after he made discoveries of some of the more interesting Australian mammals: 'It will always be a source of pleasure to me to remember that I was the first to describe and figure the Great Black and Red Wallaroos... and many other new species of Kangaroos.'



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