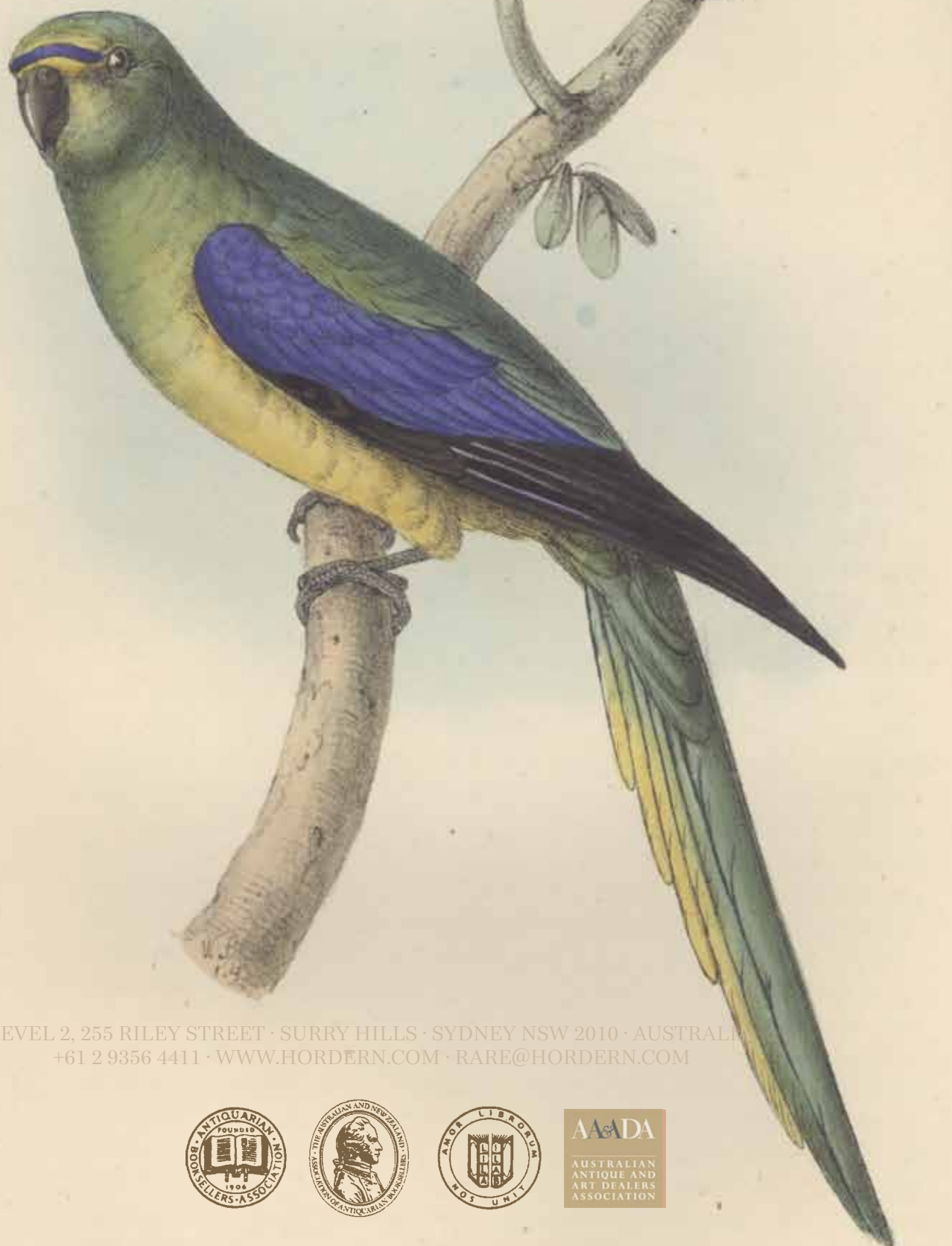


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SWAINSON, William.

Zoological Illustrations...

Six volumes, octavo, 318 handcoloured plates, an excellent set in uniform contemporary green half morocco over marbled boards, all edges gilt. London, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820-1823 & 1830-1833.

INCLUDING MANY NEWLY DISCOVERED SPECIMENS FROM AUSTRALIA & THE SOUTH SEAS

A particularly attractive set of both the first and second series of this beautiful work of natural history; all published, and rare in such fine original condition. The importance of this work to Australian and Pacific natural history cannot be overestimated: several plates feature Australian specimens - particularly birds - figured for the first time, while many of the illustrations are derived from the collections of important figures such as Sir Joseph Banks, Elizabeth Bligh, Allan Cunningham and John Byron. Peculiarly attractive is a plate in the second series, depicting the Jamaican "Two-Toothed Disk Snail", from an original sketch by John Lewin, a friend of the Swainson family.

Swainson's friend William Elford Leach, head of zoology at the British Museum, first encouraged him to experiment with lithography so as to make drawings of animals suitable for colouring. Thus began the publication of this, his first major work, in which all of the plates are by the author; Swainson was the first illustrator and naturalist to use lithography in this way, achieving a fresh and admirable style.

The work deals with specimens from all around the globe, with many from Java, the East Indies, and the Americas (particularly Brazil, visited by Swainson in 1816). Of great interest are the many plates illustrating specimens from the South Seas. Swainson was particularly good on shells, although he relied on the sometimes poor recording of earlier collectors, and was sometimes not able to be more specific than simply giving their habitat as "South Seas". There are, nonetheless, three illustrations of Australian shells, the "New Holland Mitre", the "Mitra melaniana", and the "Scaphella maculata", the last from the collection of Elizabeth Bligh. Several other South Seas shells are from the collection of Sir Joseph Banks, including the "Mitra vitatta", about which Swainson comments that "this superb shell is figured from a matchless specimen brought home by that illustrious and lamented patron of science, the late Sir J. Banks, from the Pacific Ocean".

The work is rich with images of Australian birds, with lovely depictions of the "Azure Kingsfisher", "Red-shouldered Parakeet", "Turcosine Parrakeet", "Blue-fronted Parakeet", and the "Tabuan, or King Parrakeet" (drawn by Swainson from a live specimen). He includes an image of the "White-collared Honeysucker", with the interesting note that "Lewin's figure is so excellent, that I should not again have represented this bird, had not the plate been prepared previous to the publication of his work". Perhaps the most personal note accompanies his depiction of "Swainson's, or Blue-bellied Lory" (*Trichoglossus Swainsoni*), where he comments on his "pleasure at seeing our name affixed to this charming bird, and in clearing up its history. As a child we well remember our unwearied delight at seeing its figure in *White's Voyage*".

Several Australian birds are depicted for the first time. This interesting group, which we list here with Swainson's original scientific designations, includes the "Yellow-tufted Honeysucker" (*Melliphaga auricomis*); "Red-Collared Parakeet" (*Psittacus Barabandii*), from a skin in the possession of Mr Leadbeater; the "Keel-billed Flycatcher" (*Muscipeta carinata*), "from a specimen belonging to Mr. Brookes; since which, I have received two others from New Holland"; and the so-called "New Holland variety" of the "White-eyed Warbler" (*Sylvia annulosa*), described by George Caley. Further, of great significance are the two birds noticed from specimens collected by Allan Cunningham, the famous natural historian and His Majesty's Botanist in New South Wales, who sent the specimens to Swainson: the "Black & White Robin" (*Petroica bicolor*) and the "Golden-eared Parrakeet" (*Leptolophus auricomis*). The latter had only recently been pictured in Edward Lear's *Parrots*, but Swainson criticises the "peculiarly inappropriate" name Lear gave it.

Charmingly, three Australian butterflies are also figured here, two for the first time. The first is the "Cressida Butterfly" (*Cressida Heliconides*), from two in his own collection and 'received from Van Diemens Land' (pictured right). The other two, the Australian Jasia-Butterfly (*Jasia Australis*) and the Australian Burnet (*Heleona fenestrata*), are both recorded as being collected on the north-west coast of Australia by Allan Cunningham on the King voyage.

Not only is Swainson's important work rarely offered, very few examples in contemporary bindings seem to have survived as complete sets, as here: it is more commonly seen in parts, even as single volumes. This work is not in Ferguson, who did note Swainson's work in cataloguing Elizabeth Bligh's shell collection for auction in 1822 (Ferguson, 879). Sitwell lists the first series as having one hundred and ninety eight plates, but all copies of which we are aware, including the copy in the State Library of South Australia, have one hundred and eighty two plates, as here.

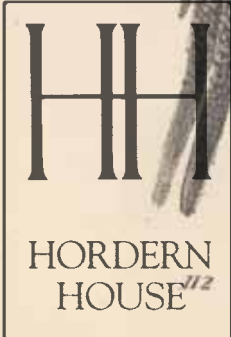
\$28,750

Dance, 'A History of Shell Collecting', pp. 91-2; Nissen IVB, 911; not in Ferguson; Sitwell, 'Fine Bird Books', p. 110.

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