

# A NEW SPECIES AND SUB-SPECIES OF FRUIT-BATS (*PTEROPUS*) FROM THE SANTA CRUZ GROUP.

By

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During a collecting expedition amongst some of the islands of the Santa Cruz Group from July to August, 1926, when Mr. A. A. Livingstone and myself had the good fortune to be guests of Mr. N. S. Heffernan, then District Officer of the Group, a very interesting collection of fruit-bats representing three species was obtained. Apart from the historical importance of Vanikoro Island because of the loss there in 1788 of La Pérouse's two ships, great zoological interest attaches to the fateful spot owing to the visitation of the famous naturalists Quoy and Gaimard, the first to make scientific observations and collections in that region. Their collections were naturally very incomplete and also subject to considerable confusion, as later researches in various branches have shown, doubtless owing to the conditions of work and storage aboard the "Astrolabe," as well as to the fact that the range of individual forms would not then be considered of so much importance.

Of the fruit-bats, the large and small species occurring on Vanikoro retain the maximum interest owing to the confusion in which they have become involved. The history of the two forms has been detailed by Andersen,<sup>1</sup> by whom doubt was cast upon the occurrence there of the smaller form, which he considered may have come from the Marianne Islands. This history was also reviewed in my paper,<sup>2</sup> in which specimens collected at Vanikoro by Livingstone and myself definitely fixed that island as the habitat of *Pteropus tuberculatus*.

Specimens of the larger Vanikoran species were also obtained by us at Santa Cruz Island and the nearby Reef Islands. Much to our disappointment we were unable to call at the outlying and seldom visited island of Tikopia, but later, Dr. Raymond Firth, well-known New Zealand anthropologist, very kindly took a collecting can on behalf of the Trustees, and collected a fine series of ten large bats and some birds, while engaged upon his researches there. These specimens from the various islands of the Group, constituting a series of twenty-six, confuse the issue regarding the larger Vanikoran species described as *P. vanikorensis* by Quoy and Gaimard, as the minimum dimensions of the recent very extensive series greatly exceed the external dimensions given by Andersen for *vanikorensis*, while certain cranial and dental measurements, particularly the lengths of the upper and lower molar rows, make it clear that two different forms are indicated.

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<sup>1</sup> Andersen.—*Cat. Chiroptera, Brit. Mus.*, 1, 1912, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Troughton.—*Rac. Austr. Mus.*, xv, v, 1927, pp. 355-6.