

hood of every bizcacha hole on the line of road, as he expected, he soon found it. This habit of picking up whatever may be lying on the ground anywhere near its habitation must cost much trouble. For what purpose it is done I am quite unable to form even the most remote conjecture: it cannot be for defence, because the rubbish is chiefly placed above the mouth of the burrow, which enters the ground at a very small inclination. No doubt there must exist some good reason; but the inhabitants of the country are quite ignorant of it. The only fact which I know analogous to it is the habit of that extraordinary Australian bird, the *Calodera maculata*, which makes an elegant vaulted passage of twigs for playing in, and which collects near the spot land and sea shells, bones, and the feathers of birds, especially brightly colored ones. Mr. Gould, who has described these facts, informs me that the natives, when they lose any hard object, search the playing passages, and he has known a tobacco pipe thus recovered.

The little owl (*Athene cunicularia*), which has been so often mentioned, on the plains of Buenos Ayres exclusively inhabits the holes of the bizcacha; but in Banda Oriental it is its own workman. During the open day, but more especially in the evening, these birds may be seen in every direction standing frequently by pairs on the hillock near their burrows. If disturbed they either enter the hole, or, uttering a shrill harsh cry, move with a remarkably undulatory flight to a short distance, and then turning round, steadily gaze at their pursuer. Occasionally in the evening they may be heard hooting. I found in the stomachs of two which I opened the remains of mice, and I one day saw a small snake killed and carried away. It is said that snakes are their common prey during the daytime. I may here mention, as showing on what various kinds of food owls subsist, that a species killed among the islets of the Chonos Archipelago had its stomach full of good-sized crabs. In India¹ there is a fishing genus of owls, which likewise catches crabs.

¹ Journal of Asiatic Soc., vol. v. p. 363.