https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/

Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London
London Academic Press, [etc.] 1833-1965
https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/44963

pt.12-15 (1844-1847):
https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46217

Article/Chapter Title: An account of Palolo, a sea-worm eaten in the Navigator Islands, with a description by J.E. Gray.
Author(s): John B. Stair
Subject(s): Annelida, Polychaeta, Systematics, Taxonomy
Page(s): Page [i], Title Page, Page 17, Page 18

Holding Institution: Natural History Museum Library, London
Sponsored by: Natural History Museum Library, London

Generated 1 July 2025 1:44 PM
https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/pdf4/1817137i00046217.pdf

This page intentionally left blank.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

OF LONDON.

BRITISH MUSEUM
Z D
NATURAL HISTORY

PART XV.

1847.

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY;
SOLD AT THEIR HOUSE IN HANOVER SQUARE,
AND BY MESSRS. LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

I beg to propose the above generic appellation for a section of this family, comprising those species distinguished by the extraordinary ruffs of downy feathers with which their tarsi are clothed, and by the sexes being nearly alike in the colour of their plumage. All the species known frequent the mountain districts of the Cordillerian Andes or the valleys immediately beneath them.

I possess five species of this form, and I have seen two others in the collection of Mr. Loddiges, which I believe to be equally typical.

Sp. 1. Eriopus vestitus.

Ornismya vestita, Gouy de Longuemare; Less. in Rev. Zool. 1838, p. 314; Boiss. Rev. Zool. 1839, p. 18, 1840, p. 8; Mag. de Zool. pl. ——?

T. uropygialis, Fras. Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1840, p. 15.

O. glomata, Less. Echo du monde savant, young?

Sp. 2. Eriopus cupreoventris.

Trochilus cupreoventris, Fras. in Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1840, p. 14.

Ornismya maniculata, Less. Echo du monde savant.

Ornismya vestita ♀, Gouy de Long. Rev. Zool. 1838, p. 314.

Ornismya glomata, Less. Echo du monde savant, young?

Sp. 3. Eriopus Aline.

Ornismya Aline, Bourc. Rev. Zool. 1842, p. 373; Ann. de Lyons, tom. v. 1842, p. 344. pl. xix.

Sp. 4. Eriopus mosquera.

T. mosquera, Bourc. et Delatt. Rev. Zool. 1846, p. 306.

Sp. 5. Eriopus Derbyi.

T. Derbyi, Bourc. et Delatt. Rev. Zool. 1846, p. 306.

This group forms part of M. Lesson's *Race Vestipedes*, the genera comprised in which have not as yet I believe been defined.

4. An account of Palolo, a Sea Worm eaten in the Navigator Islands. By the Rev. J. B. Stair, with a description by J. E. Gray, Esq., F.R.S. etc.

The Rev. J. B. Stair kindly presented numerous specimens of this Sea Worm to the British Museum, but unfortunately most of the specimens are broken into short pieces, and as yet I have not been able to discover any specimen with a head. It appears to be a new genus allied to *Arenicola*, which may be thus described:—

Palola, Gray.

Body cylindrical, separated into equal joints, each joint with a small tuft of three or four spicula on the middle of each side. Head ——? Last joint ending in a couple of tentacles. Eggs globular.

Palola viridis, n. s.

Green, with a row of round black spots down the middle of the dorsal? surface; one spot on the middle of each joint.

Hab. Navigator Islands.

I have found accompanying this worm a single specimen of a green *Nereis*, which differs from it in being paler green above and whitish beneath, shorter, more depressed, and furnished with white tentacles.

The following is the account which Mr. Stair kindly communicated to me with the specimen from Samoa:—

"*Palolo.*—Palolo is the native name for a species of Sea Worm which is found in some parts of Samoa (the Navigator Islands) in the South Pacific Ocean. They come regularly in the months of October and November, during portions of two days in each month, viz. the day before and the day on which the moon is in her last quarter.

"They appear in much greater numbers on the second than on the first day of their rising, and are only observed for two or three hours in the early part of each morning of their appearance. At the first dawn of day they may be felt by the hand swimming on the surface of the water; and as the day advances their numbers increase, so that by the time the sun has risen, thousands may be observed in a very small space, sporting merrily during their short visit to the surface of the ocean. On the second day they appear at the same time and in a similar manner, but in such countless myriads that the surface of the ocean is covered with them for a considerable extent. On each day, after sporting for an hour or two, they disappear until the next season, and not one is ever observed during the intervening time. Sometimes, when plentiful at one island in one month, scarcely any are observed the next; but they always appear with great regularity at the times mentioned, and these are the only times at which they are observed throughout the whole year. They are found only in certain parts of the islands, generally near the openings of the reefs on portions of the coast on which much fresh water is found, but this is not always the case.

"In size they may be compared to a very fine straw, and are of various colours and lengths, green, brown, white and speckled, and in appearance and mode of swimming resemble very small snakes.

"They are exceedingly brittle, and if broken into many pieces, each piece swims off as though it were an entire worm. No particular direction appeared to be taken by them in swimming. I observed carefully to see whether they came from seaward or rose from the reef, and feel assured they come from the latter place.

"The natives are exceedingly fond of them, and calculate with great exactness the time of their appearance, which is looked forward to with great interest. The worms are caught in small baskets, beautifully made, and when taken on shore are tied up in leaves in small bundles, and baked. Great quantities are eaten undressed, but either dressed or undressed are esteemed a great delicacy. Such is the desire to eat Palolo by all classes, that immediately the fishing parties reach the shore, messengers are despatched in all directions with large quantities to parts of the island on which none appear.

"John B. Stair."