

Edouard Traviès (Doullens 1809 - Paris 1876)

A Papuan or Australian King Parrot (Alisterus chloropterus or Alisterus scapularis) and a Monk Parakeet (Myiopsitta monachus)

Circa: 1834

Watercolour, pen and brown ink and wash, with framing lines in pencil.

Signed and dated Edouard Travies pt. 1834. in the lower margin.

170 x 100 cm. (6 3/4 x 4 in.)

The bird depicted at the top of the present sheet has previously been identified as a Papuan or green-winged king parrot, a species native to New Guinea. It is equally plausible, however, that the bird could be an Australian king parrot, native to eastern Australia. The males of both species share the same colouring and pattern of their plumage, which can be seen here. Each has a vibrant red head and chest, with deep green wings that share a brighter green wingbar at their centres. While the wingbar is slightly thicker on the wing of the Papuan king parrot, this alone does not suffice to firmly identify which of the two species Traviès intended to depict.

Native to South America, the monk parakeet originated in Argentina and surrounding portions of Brazil and Uruguay. A small, bright green bird with a greyish face and chest, they have a harsh, screeching voice. Interestingly, it is the only member of the parrot family which builds nests from sticks and breeds colonially. With a separate entrance for each pair, a single nest can grow to be quite large; a typical structure contains up to twenty chambers, but in extreme cases they can contain as many as two hundred. Monk parakeets have created self-sustaining feral populations across the globe – including in the United States, where they were imported by the thousands as pets between the 1960s and 1980s.

This is one of sevetal draiwngs by Travies which were once part of the exceptional collection of French ornithological watercolours of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries assembled in the 1920s and 1930s by the French industrialist and bibliophile Marcel Jeanson (1885-1942).

Artist description:

Among the finest natural history draughtsmen of the 19th century in France, Edouard Traviès de Villers was a gifted watercolourist and illustrator, and exhibited at the Paris Salons between 1831 and 1866. Best known for his ornithological watercolours, his activity in this field culminated in seventy-nine magnificent illustrations for his book Les oiseaux les plus remarquables par leurs forms et leurs couleurs, published in Paris and London in 1857. Traviès also illustrated other works of natural history, such as Types du règne animal: Buffon en estampes; a work intended for children that appeared in 1864. Traviès was further known for his paintings and watercolours of dead game, depicted hanging from a nail on a wall in a sort of trompe-l'oeil effect; indeed, he was one of the first 19th century French artists to develop this theme, which had been established in the previous century by such artists as Jean-Baptiste Oudry.

These watercolours by Edouard Traviès were once part of the exceptional collection of French ornithological watercolours of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries assembled in the 1920s and 1930s by the French industrialist and bibliophile Marcel Jeanson (1885-1942). Several of these watercolours were used to illustrate Achille Richard's Oeuvres complètes de Buffon, published in Paris in 1834, 1838 and 1845.