

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Edouard TRAVIES (Doullens 1809 - Paris 1876)

A Paradise Riflebird (*Lophorina paradisea*) and a Blue-Throated Bee Eater (*Merops viridis*)

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

Signed and dated Edouard Travies pt. 1835. in the lower margin.

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

Depicted at the top of the sheet is an adult male paradise riflebird. Found in the rainforests of eastern Australia, the paradise riflebird has a range which follows the coast from southeastern Queensland to northeastern New South Wales. The plumage of the male and female riflebird is vastly different. Adult males are almost completely black, except for the iridescent blue and green of their crown, throat and tail feathers and the vibrant green found on their lower breast and flank. In contrast, adult females are grey-brown with reddish-brown primary and secondary wing feathers and a white stripe along the top of their head. One of the most interesting facts about the paradise riflebird is that when an adult male is trying to woo a potential mate, he partakes in a mating dance which involves raising both wings into the air, before he throws his head back and whips it from side to side to best show off his iridescent throat.

With a vast range that spans from southeastern China all the way to down to the Greater Sunda Islands of Borneo, Java, Sulawesi and Sumatra, blue-throated bee-eaters can be found in a wide array of habitats in lower elevations. As is indicated by their name, blue-throated bee-eaters have a diet which consists of a variety of flying insects, including bees, wasps, dragonflies, beetles, and other large flies.

A small, colourful bird, both adult males and females share the same plumage with a signature blue throat and long trailing central tail feathers. They are known to produce a number of different vocalisations, from long calls and alarm calls to low chirps, purrs, and sharp coos.

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 formes 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.