

apprehend that in strictness we ought to retain the name *rufus* for the Indian and Burmese birds.

A. O. H.

Notes on some Birds in Mr. Mandelli's Collection from
Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet.

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AT Mr. Mandelli's request, I have written out a few notes on some of the birds lately procured by him. The specimens mentioned have, in all doubtful cases, been compared by Mr. Hume with skins in his own collection.

A. nisus.

A. melanoschistus.

The following are the lengths of the wings of 23 Sparrow-Hawks in Mr. Mandelli's collection. The specimens are not sexed:—

Eight smaller specimens, supposed males, with wings respectively 8·35; 8·35; 8·4; 8·4; 8·4; 8·65.

Seventeen larger supposed to be females; 9·55; 9·55; 9·6; 9·6; 9·75; 9·75; 9·75; 9·8; 9·8; 9·8; 9·85; 10; 10; 10·05; 10·05; 10·05; 10·1.

Several of the birds are very dark coloured.

The question whether *A. melanoschistus* is really distinguishable from *A. nisus* appears far from solution. If the typical male of the former, with a wing 9·75 and tail 8·5, was correctly sexed (and it was determined by Captain Marshall, see Hume, Scrap Book, pp. 129, 131) there is an end to the matter, since the difference in size between the sexes would be so very much smaller in *A. melanoschistus* than in the European Sparrow-Hawk that the two must, I think, be considered distinct. But there is no point concerning birds, at least this is my experience, in which there is greater liability to error than in sexing; and unless Mr. Hume has additional specimens of large males, correctly sexed, I should be inclined to class the original male as doubtful. It will then be seen that the above measurements, taking those of the supposed females, only go a long way towards bridging the difference between the average European Sparrow-Hawk with a wing 9·5, according to Sharpe (Cat. Ac. Brit. Mus., p. 134) and the types of *A. melanoschistus*, with wings from 10·12 to 10·5, (Scrap Book, pp. 129-130). The variation is further shown in the opposite direction by the series of females from the British Islands, measured by Sharpe and Dresser (Birds of Europe, Pt. IX). In these the wings measure 8·8 to 9·3.

Spizætus kieneri.

A young bird, apparently in changing plumage, differs from the adult in being browner and less uniform in colour above, and in almost wanting the ferruginous abdomen and the stripes on the lower plumage. In still younger birds there is probably no trace of either. The following is a description of the plumage:—

Upper parts blackish brown; most of the feathers with slightly paler margins, and some of the buffy white basal portions of the feathers shewing about the back of the neck; rump hair-brown, a distinct buff supercilium running back to the nape, and the forehead buff; cheeks below the eye with elongated black spots; ear-coverts blackish brown; primaries obsoletely banded outside, distinctly within; central rectrices blackish with scarcely distinct narrow black transverse bands; outer tail feathers paler and transversely banded with black; lower parts buffy white, a few lanceolate streaks on the lower neck and sides of the breast, and the shafts of the abdominal feathers black, forming very narrow lines. A little ferruginous on the belly; thigh-coverts dull ferruginous; flanks black behind and ferruginous in front, with broad black central streaks to the feathers; under side of wing white. Wing, 15·25; tail, 8·25; bill from gape, 1·4. The specimen was obtained in Native Sikkim in April 1876.

Bulaca newarensis.

A nestling of this species, about half grown, has the feathers of the crown and hind-neck earthy brown, with broad fluffy dirty-white edges; ruff deep wood brown with a purplish tinge; cheeks behind eye pale wood brown; loreal bristles and bristly feathers around eye nearly black; feathers of back, rump and wing-coverts light brown, banded with buffy white, and with finer white tips; rectrices hair-brown, banded with regular narrow transverse paler bars, which are closer together and paler in colour towards the end, and the extreme tips are white; primaries hair-brown, with paler transverse bands, those on the outer webs not corresponding to those on the inner, the bars being closer together towards the tips, which is white; secondaries paler, and the bars closer together; chin bristles blackish; behind them are some earthy brown feathers with pale margins; throat pure white, and all the remaining portion of the under parts, including the thigh covers, dirty white, with a tendency to dark bands on the flanks. Wing, 11; tail 6 inches.

Cuculus striatus (*C. Himalayanus*, Vigors.) *C. micropterus*.

It has been frequently pointed out that these closely-allied species may always be distinguished by the size of the bills.

This has been recently noticed again by Mr. Hume, in STRAY FEATHERS, III., p. 79. Mr. Mandelli called my attention to the circumstance that in his large series there is a perfect gradation from the smallest bill of *C. striatus* to the largest of *C. micropterus*. On looking through the specimens I found that the two species could be distinguished with one precaution. Birds in the first plumage must be compared with those of the other species at the same age and adults with adults. *C. micropterus* in its first season's plumage has a bill no larger than that of an adult *C. striatus*.

Cyornis rubeculoides ? Var.

Amongst numerous specimens of *Cyornis rubeculoides* from the Dooars of Bhotan, Mr. Mandelli has received nine specimens closely resembling the female of that species, but still constantly distinguished by several marked characters. As the specimens have not been sexed, it is impossible to say whether all are females or not. Mr. Mandelli is much disposed to consider this species new; he has never seen any passage between it and *C. rubeculoides*. Mr. Hume, however, has shewn me very similar specimens (females) from Burmah, and has assured me that the males are not specifically separable from those of *C. rubeculoides*.

In these specimens from the Bhutan Dooars, the throat is always whitish, whilst the breast is less rufous and more olivaceous than in typical *C. rubeculoides*; the abdomen is dull olivaceous, scarcely paler than the breast, and with only a little white about the middle, instead of being white throughout. The upper surface is darker; the head and hind-neck very grey and well distinguished from the back, whilst in *C. rubeculoides* the difference is trifling; the sides of the head in the Dooar birds are greyer and the lores whitish instead of olivaceous; the bill, as a rule too, is longer, but this difference is not constant.

Erythrosterna parva.

A specimen from the Bhotan Dooars, shot in January of the present year, belongs to this species. It may be at one distinguished from *E. albicilla*, (*E. leucura*, of Jerdon) of which several specimens were obtained at the same time, by its grey head and hind-neck, and by the red breast retained in winter and descending much lower than in *E. albicilla*. This is probably the most eastern locality yet recorded for the European *E. parva*.

Merula kessleri. Przevalski, Birds of Mongolia.

Rowley's Ornith., Misc., Pt. VI, p. 199., pl. LIV, 11.

A female Blackbird, obtained by Mr. Mandelli from Tibet, where, according to the label, it was shot in November, appears

to belong to the above species. Mr. Davison, who had been looking at *Przevalski's* figures, recognized the species ; it is a peculiar rather dull-coloured form, with a ferruginous abdomen. The following is a description :—

Upper parts of head and hind-neck brownish black ; the feathers with brown edges ; sides of head, including lores, dull brown, passing down into dingy white ; ear-coverts dark brown with whitish mesial streaks ; upper part of back greyish earthy brown, divided by a distinct line from the darker neck ; rump rather paler and tinged with ferruginous ; scapulars blackish with the broad margins of greyish brown, tinged with rufous ; quills and wing-coverts brownish black, but secondaries (tertiaries) dark brown ; the margins of the secondaries earthy grey, those of the coverts brown ; tail feathers blackish, central pair browner ; chin dirty white, passing into pale brown on the throat ; all the feathers, including those on both sides below the ear-coverts, with blackish spots near the tips ; breast earthy brown with a ferruginous wash ; abdomen similar at first, but paler, divided by a distinct line from the breast, and becoming distinctly ferruginous behind ; bill and legs in the dried skin brown. Wing, 5·7 ; * tail 4·3 ; tarsus, 1·45 ; culmen, 1·1 ; bill from nostril, 0·55.

In the male, represented on Mr. Rowley's plate (a very poor figure, evidently copied from a bad drawing), the bill is yellow as in the other Blackbirds ; the head, neck, and breast, much blacker than in the female, and the pale earthy grey back and anterior abdomen form a pale ring round the body, the lower abdomen being deep ferruginous.

Carpodacus rubicilla.

A specimen of a female obtained from Tibet, north of Sikkim, in December 1876, adds considerably to the known range of this species.

Sterna tibetana, Saunders. P. Z. S. 1876, p. 649.

One specimen, killed July 1875, in the region of Tibet immediately north of Sikkim, agrees perfectly with the description given by Mr. Howard Saunders, being darker in colour both above and below than *S. fluviatilis*, (*S. hirundo* of Temminck and of Jerdon's Birds of India, but not of Linnaeus,) with a distinct vinous tint on the breast and abdomen and rather

*The tail is measured as usual from the insertion of the central tail feathers ; the culmen is from the rise of the skull to the tip of bill. In *merula* and many other birds in which the bare culmen runs back between the feathers, no good measurement of the bill from the forehead can be made.

smaller bill and feet. The following description may serve to identify the species should it be found within Indian limits.

Whole head above and nape black; lores, sides of head, below the eye and the hind-neck immediately behind the black nape white, the last passing at once into the ashy grey of the whole mantle; primary quills with white shafts, except near the tip; first primary with the outer web black, inner web dusky near the shaft with a broad white inner margin; the tip of both webs dusky; the second quill has the outer web ashy grey, the inner web dusky near the shafts, white on the inner margin, except towards the blackish tip, from which a dusky band runs up the inner edge of the feather; the third, fourth, and fifth quills the same, except that margin runs up both edges; remainder of the quills the same colour as the mantle; the secondaries having a narrow terminal white border; rump and tail white; the outer webs of all rectrices, except the central pair, grey, being darkest on the outermost pair; chin and throat white; breast and abdomen pale grey, with a distinct pinkish hue; wing-lining and under tail-coverts white; bill red; the tip of both mandibles dusky; legs red; claws dark coloured. Wing, 11.5; tail, 5.8, deeply forked; the outer rectrices exceeding the central pair by 2.6; tarsus 0.77; culmen 1.65; bill from front, 1.25.

Podiceps albescens, Mandelli. Sp. Nov.

Mr. Mandelli has had, for some years in his collection, a little Grebe, shot on one of the lakes in Native Sikkim. The skin has hitherto been looked upon as that of an *albino* of *P. minor*, but Mr. Mandelli tells me that he has for a long time greatly doubted the identification; and after examining and comparing the skin, I am of opinion that it is not an *albino*, and I am convinced that it cannot be *P. minor*. The plumage of the body is chiefly white, but there are brown central streaks to the feathers of the back and to the secondary quills, and these marks are perfectly regular, not in patches; the bill and legs are as dark as in *P. minor*, and the feathers of the posterior abdomen, although silky white at the tips, are grey at the base; the primaries are all greyish brown; the forehead and chin dusky black, and the throat and hind head all round ferruginous. Now, all these characters taken together are decidedly adverse to the idea that the skin is that of an *albino*; and the man who shot the bird declared that there were a pair of them similarly coloured. Of course but little dependence can be placed upon this, though it is favourable to the probabilities of the bird being a pale coloured species. The distinction from *P. minor* is shewn by the ferruginous coloration encircling the hinder part of the head completely: in the little Grebe, in full breeding plu-

mage, the nape appears always to be dusky, and the ferruginous colouration not to extend across behind the head; the dimensions of *P. albescens* and *P. minor* appear identical. The following is an account of the supposed new species:—

Description.—Forehead, sides of the head as far back as the hinder part of eyes and chin blackish brown; lores and base of the lower mandible beneath the lores naked, and doubtless brightly coloured in the living bird; the whole hinder head, nape and throat, forming a complete ring, rich chestnut, a little paler below; hinder part of neck pale brown; the feathers tipped white; sides of neck white; back white; the feathers with narrow central earthy brown stripes, extending throughout the feather; these stripes disappear on the rump, but are well marked on the scapulars, a few of the latter being almost entirely earthy brown except at the tip; primary quills earthy brown with narrow white tips; secondaries white, with dark central stripes; wing-coverts white, some of the larger with faint mesial stripes; whole under-parts from the throat pure silky white; bill in dried skin blackish; tips of both mandibles whitish; legs brown (probably olive when fresh). Wing, 3.75; tarsus, 1.3; mid toe, 1.8 culmen, 0.96; bill from front, 0.84.

Nobelties?

Arachnothera simillima, Sp. Nov.

Extremely like A flavigaster, Eyton, but smaller, somewhat yellower above and below, with a much smaller bill and distinguished at once by the rami of the lower mandible not meeting to form the angle of the gonys till within 0.6 of the point.

HAVING only a single native skin of this species I should have hesitated to describe it were it not for the marked structural difference alluded to at the close of the diagnosis.

In *flavigaster* and most of the *Arachnotheras* (including with these *Arachnoraphis*) with which I am acquainted, the chin terminates at the junction of the rami of the lower mandible in an obtuse rather rounded curve.

This curve is distant in *flavigaster*, the species which our present species most closely resembles, from 1 to 1.2 inches, according to sex, from the tip of the lower mandible. We have a very large series of our own collecting of both sexes, and there is no doubt on this point. In *chrysogenys*, of which we have an equally large series, it is about 1.0 inch; in *robusta* about 1.7 inch; in what I call *crassirostris*, but which Captain Shelley