

EUCICHLA CYANURA.

Blue-tailed Pitta.

Turdus cyanurus, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 828.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 361.
Myiothera affinis, Horsf. Trans. Linn. Soc., vol. xiii. p. 154.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 66.
Pitta cyanura, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. i. p. 246, pl. 153.—Gould, Birds of Asia, part 15.
Punglor, Java, Horsfield.

OF the numerous members of the present very beautiful family of birds, the comparatively common *Pitta cyanura* must be regarded as one of the most elegant; it is also one of the few species respecting which any information has been placed on record. The following interesting account, by Solomon Müller, of the bird, its habits, and economy is taken from the recently published 'Monograph of the Pittidæ,' by Mr. D. G. Elliot, of New York, a gentleman deserving the praise of all ornithologists for his labours in their own branch of science:—

"The *Pitta cyanura* is a mountain-bird, and is but seldom met with in level wooded regions, but is most often seen on old coffee-plantations and in places closely overgrown with shrubbery and seeds, at a height of from 600 to 3000 feet above the level of the sea. It is found usually in the gloomiest spots, and generally on or near the ground.

"They are often met with in pairs, and frequently also singly. Whenever several birds are together, say five or six, they are invariably in such cases one family, of which the young have but lately left the nest, and for a certain period still remain with the old. When two old males meet, they often fight with each other, in the same manner as the Quail and other quarrelsome birds do which are in the habit of dwelling on the ground: as with those species, the time for these battles among the *Pittæ cyanuræ* is generally shortly before their breeding-season, the appointed time for which seems to be from January to May.

"Upon one occasion we discovered near Mount Parang, in the Parang Regencies, a nest of this bird, on the 4th of February, which, like another brought to us a few weeks later, contained five eggs; a third nest with four eggs we found during the month of March, on the western slope of Mount Pangerango; and finally a fourth, with an equal number of eggs, we succeeded in obtaining at the beginning of April.

"The nest is generally built a little above the ground, hardly ever more than from 6 to 8 feet. It is most often placed in a secluded spot among the tough branches of the parasitic orchids growing on the trunk of some old tree. These closely grown plants being frequently damp and mouldy throughout, it follows that occasionally the nest becomes soaked through from beneath.

"On the whole, the *Pitta cyanura* is not of very shy habits, although one is sometimes met with at which it is not easy to get a shot. When chased, they fly along the ground with a strong, free, rapid flight, take refuge at various distances, and alight either near the ground on a projecting stump or upon the branch of some trunk. Seeking their food upon the ground, they are seen sometimes, like a chicken, scratching with their feet, and greedily examining with their bill the scattered dry leaves and the uncovered spot of ground. Their food consists of earth-worms, beetles, and other insects and their larvæ."

The male has the crown of the head, lores, a broad stripe from the base of the lower mandible, and the occiput deep velvety black; over each eye a broad stripe of rich gamboge-yellow; all the upper surface and tertiaries rich golden brown; wing-coverts deep black, with an oblong mark of white at the tip of the outer web of each feather; primaries and secondaries black at the base, passing into brown at the tip; two or three of the central secondaries narrowly margined on their apical portion with white; upper and under tail-coverts and tail very rich deep blue; throat white, washed with pale yellow, which gradually deepens into gamboge-yellow on the sides of the neck; below this light-coloured gorget a band of rich deep blue; remainder of the under surface crossed alternately with narrow bands of orange-yellow and deep blue, and suffused with a lilaceous bloom on the centre of the abdomen; bill black; feet flesh-colour.

The female has the head light orange-brown, striated with brownish black on the crown, the black mark on the side of the head finely striated posterior to the eye with orange; throat white, washed with light orange-brown on the sides; the line of blue bounding the gorget very narrow; the alternate bands of the under surface black and pale greyish brown, instead of blue and orange, and the lilaceous hue much paler; in all other respects the plumage resembles that of the male.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the size of life.