

ORTHONYX SPALDINGI, Rams.

Spalding's Orthonyx.

Orthonyx Spaldingi, Rams. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1868, p. 386.

ORNITHOLOGISTS will, I am sure, join with me in congratulating Mr. Spalding, the discoverer, and Mr. Ramsay, the describer, on the acquisition of a second species of this remarkable genus. Further research in the untrodden scrubs and brushes of Northern Australia may yet unveil to us other species of a form especially adapted for roaming over prostrate trees, moss-covered stones, and leafy dells, and obtaining food amidst the herbaceous and other plants peculiar to such situations.

Although the *Orthonyx Spaldingi* is nearly twice the size of *O. spinicaudus*, it will be seen that the two species closely assimilate in their structure, and in certain parts of the colouring of the respective sexes. I wish it were in my power to communicate any information respecting the nidification of the new bird; whenever it may be obtained it will doubtless prove of considerable interest, inasmuch as the form of the nest and the white colour of the eggs of *O. spinicaudus* are strikingly different from those of every other Australian bird, and we may reasonably infer that those of the new species will be very similar.

The following notes by Mr. Ramsay, which comprise all that is at present known respecting the *Orthonyx Spaldingi*, are extracted from the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for 1868, p. 386:—

"This fine bird was obtained in a dense brush about thirty-five miles inland from Rockingham Bay, Queensland, and is a valuable addition to our avifauna, being the second species of the anomalous genus *Orthonyx*. Its much greater size and jet-black plumage at once distinguish it from the *Orthonyx spinicaudus* of the New-South-Wales brushes, to which, however, it closely assimilates in habits and actions, frequenting the thickest parts of the scrubs, and obtaining its food by scratching among the fallen leaves and *débris*.

"I beg to propose the name of *Spaldingi* for this new species, after its discoverer, who has worked hard in the ornithological line for many years, and added to my collection many valuable and rare birds.

"*Male*. The whole of the head, cheeks, and ear-coverts, the sides of the head, sides and back of the neck, the sides of the chest, and the shoulders jet-black. Wings above brownish black, the feathers broadly margined with dark brown; primaries and outer webs of the secondaries brown, lighter on the outer webs of the primaries. Chin, throat, chest, and centre of the breast as far as the abdomen white; sides of the breast, flanks, upper and under tail-coverts, rump, and back olive-brown; base of the feathers and abdomen dull slaty brown; the tail, lower part of the hind neck, and between the shoulders blackish brown; bill black; eyelids flesh-white; irides blackish brown; legs and feet brownish black. The tail is long and pointed, the two outer feathers one-fourth less than the centre ones, the shafts of which are black and much curved downwards, but not so much worn into spines as in the remainder of the feathers.

"Total length (of skin) 11 inches; wing, from flexure 5·2; tail 5 inches; tarsi 1·9; bill, from angle of mouth 1 inch, from forehead 0·9, its width at base 0·4, height 0·4.

"The female differs from the male in having the olive-brown tinge on the upper and under parts of a reddish-brown tint, and in having the centre of the chin, throat, and chest rich deep rust-red, from which a triangular patch of white descends, lessening in width, over the breast to the abdomen; the rest of the plumage as in the male; bill black, irides blackish brown, eyelid flesh-white; legs and feet blackish brown.

"Total length (of skin) 5·5 inches; tail 4·1; wing, from flexure 4·5; bill, from angle of mouth 0·9, from forehead 0·85, height 0·3, width 0·3; tarsi 1·8."

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